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EVOLUTIONARY POSSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRATIZATION AND ATAVISTIC NATIONALISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UNRECOGNIZED STATES

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Abstract: *The question of how rising atavistic nationalism will affect democracies worldwide is an essential one of our time. In this paper, I focus instead on conducting a comparative historical analysis of atavistic nationalism in two unrecognized states: North Cyprus and Taiwan. I argue that the democratic crisis of our times is, in its essence, economic and has been precipitated by the failure of democracies to build domestic capacities to support democratic values. Furthermore, I posit that engaging populaces at the local political level will prove essential to preserving democracies around the world. I conclude by underlining that atavistic nationalism is indeed a significant threat to regional and global peace and requires further co-operation on trade and governance, and should be engaged at the local level. Lastly, I suggest that co-creating local cultures that will act to soften atavistic nationalism, which feeds off the perception of threats and fear.*

Keywords: *Unrecognized States; Democratization; Atavistic Nationalism; Economic Crises; Narrative Positioning; Taiwan; North Cyprus*

INTRODUCTION

Atavistic nationalism refers to the new and widespread model of the extremist ideology that promotes exclusive political identities based on the group's everlasting, nobler nature as a 'truth of history,' about an 'imagined reality'. Nationalist ideologies are making a strong comeback around the globe, whereas democracy as a form of governance is simultaneously on a worldwide decline (The Economist 2018; Freedom House 2017). In fact, in conjunction with a rise in the popularity of right-wing ideologies, de-democratization has occurred in advanced democracies (The Economist 2018). This defies the theoretical assumption that consolidated democracies will not retreat. However, as consolidated democracies de-democratize, both scholars and policymakers must further their understanding of the dynamics of democracy in an age of atavistic nationalism.

This paper aims to capture the complex long-term dynamics of nationalism and to inform scholars and policymakers on how to positively engage pushes for unity in a pluralistic society. Nationalism, however, is a narrative process that develops over an extended time – requiring a longitudinal and historical study – whereas it is a relatively recent occurrence within advanced democracies. Therefore, scholars need to identify and study cases where atavistic nationalism has been active for decades to produce a comprehensive study. For this purpose, I study the evolutions of North Cyprus and Taiwan through a comparative historical analysis. Thereafter, I argue that the democratic crisis of our times is, in its essence, economic and has been precipitated by the failure of democracies to build domestic, democratic capacities. I conclude by underlining that atavistic nationalism is a significant threat to regional and global peace and offer suggestions on how to deal with this threat constructively.

ATAVISTIC NATIONALISM

Defining Atavistic Nationalism

Nationalism is generally defined as a political tendency to prioritize an exclusive group in the use of the political resources of a state (Verkhovskii and Pain 2012, 52). However, the nature of nationalism, i.e. whether it is a destructive or constructive political force, has long been debated. Mishra underlines the rise of nationalism in the USA as a moment that can function as the crisis needed to jumpstart American democracy (Mishra 2017). Some other scholars who study the democratic transitions of ex-colonial states underline that the transition process was facilitated by a rising sense of nationalism (Brudny and Finkel 2011; Sabatovych 2017; Surzhko-Harned 2010). Nevertheless, most scholars instead argue that nationalism is a threat to peace at all levels – domestic, regional, and global (Bonikowski 2016; Conversi 2012; GrigorSuny

2017). The literature also underlines that a nation can be defined in one of two ways: civically or ethnocentrically. On the one hand, civic nationalism, where all citizens are afforded the same rights and privileges, can promote loyalty to the state and its democracy. This evolving nationalism espouses the democratic values of liberty, equality, and sovereignty, thus paving the way to a deep democracy (Sabatovych 2017, 1); (Fukuyama 1992). On the other hand, ethnocentric nationalism instead aims to not only achieve cultural homogeneity but also render state power exclusive (Dyrstad 2012, 818). This is antithetical to democracy.

Mostly, nationalism relies upon existing inter-group boundaries based on ethnicity and religion to promote cultural homogeneity, despite inherent societal heterogeneity (Sabatovych 2017, 4). Elites then attempt to utilize this sense of unity to create a self-sustaining system of legitimacy and thus win re-elections (Conversi 2012, 789). It is important to note that whether nationalism promotes democracy is therefore based on the will of the political elite, moderated by the extent of political mobilizations at the social level as well as the extent of societal cleavages (Sabatovych 2017, 18). Therefore, nationalism should not be treated simply as a malady.

Atavistic nationalism is a special type of ethnocentric and classist nationalism. Much as with other nationalist movements, atavistic nationalism is driven by an 'Us vs. Other' mentality (Gingrich 2006; Volkan 1998). What makes the current atavistic nationalism distinct are three factors (modified from Gingrich's typology (Gingrich 2006, 199–200)): tripartite hierarchy (elites-us-immigrants or multinational organizations-us-immigrants); fear-driven: fear of losing (globalization; capitalism) and fear of invasion/being taken advantage of (integrationist policies, terrorism, or neo-colonization); hope driven: spurred on by a mythical past and/or future of prosperity and security.

The Unrecognized States and Atavistic Nationalism

The unrecognized states have only recently come to be studied. Nevertheless, there is an agreement that these entities feature the following characteristics: a) a violent, unilateral secession from a parent state, whose *de jure* territories this new entity claims and controls *de facto*; b) independently existing for more than four years, running state institutions; c) lack of recognition by a majority of the international community (non-recognition); d) exhibiting high internal legitimacy and low external legitimacy; and lastly e) they are not completely dependent on any other state for policy-making and domestic affairs.

The relationship between atavistic nationalism and unrecognized states is significant: unrecognized states are born of and driven by incompatible forms of atavistic nationalism (Mulaj 2011, 43). Therefore, studying unrecognized states is critical for scholars to explain the dynamics of atavistic nationalism, as well as how and why it

can pave the way for either de-democratization or democratization. While atavistic nationalism threatens human rights and democracy, the existing global and local institutions have yet to put forth a coherent agenda to address this threat. Therefore, the scholarly community needs to explore this phenomenon by studying critical cases, such as unrecognized states.

CASE STUDIES: ORIGINS AND EVOLUTIONS OF ATAVISTIC NATIONALISM

North Cyprus

The Turkish Cypriot people are one of the two official communities inhabiting the island of Cyprus and a founding partner of the Republic of Cyprus. Due to a Greek military coup d'état on the island in 1974, which turned violent, the Turkish military intervened through the 'Happy Peace Operation' – what many perceive as an invasion – dividing the island physically into two. Negotiations to reunite the island went fruitless for nine years and the Turkish Cypriot community, through the will of its political leader – Rauf Denktash – and his Turkish military backing, unilaterally declared independence. They established the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC or NC) in 1983.

Denktash was a political figure who established himself as the symbol of Turkish Cypriot independence and created a network of patronage around his hero image, thus monopolizing political power (Isachenko 2012, 44–45). From its establishment until 2000, NC was ruled by corruption and a patronage network built on the distribution of plundered resources (leftover from the displaced Greek Cypriots) and the aid from Turkey (Duzgun 2000, 29), which created a two-layered dependence economy. However, this network was kept somewhat in check by the Turkish Cypriot history of democratic governance and the democratic infrastructure inherited from the Republic of Cyprus. Therefore, the political system of NC was stably semi-democratic, but featured an over-powered executive supported by the independent armed forces of another state.

This system self-legitimized in an atavistic fashion: that the Turkish Cypriots were simply Turks and that they had to be grateful to Turkey for being saved. Furthermore, by tying the Turkish Cypriots to Turkey so closely, Denktash would help the community returns to its 'prosperous times' of the Ottoman era on the island. Additionally, the only guarantee for Turkish Cypriot security and prosperity was through the reinforcement of the Turkish Cypriot ties with Turkey. Turkey was the 'Motherland' that would feed and develop NC. During this era, those who sought to argue for peacemaking with the Greek Cypriots or those who defined themselves as Cypriots (rather than Turks or Turkish Cypriots) were labeled as traitors (Duzgun 2000, 20), with Denktash claiming that only the donkeys of Cyprus were Cypriot (Isachenko 2012, 65, 69). This atavistic identity was disbursed through state-controlled media and schools, as well as symbols such as flags (Navaro-Yashin 2012, 18; 2006); however, it alienated a majority of the island's

population due to its refusal of a Cypriot culture or identity (Duzgun 2000, 69; Isachenko 2012, 47). This was a well-established atavistic system: a hierarchy of the world-a Turkic us-the 'traitors'; driven by a fear of losing political independence, plundered gains, and of a return to communal strife; and driven by the hope of remaining independent and prospering through the aid of the 'Motherland' (Duzgun 2000, 77). Additionally, the Turkish Cypriot politics and institutions self-organized under the effect of atavistic nationalism in such a way as to allow Denktash and the nationalists to monopolize political power perpetually. Up to today, the nationalists hold circa 50% of the popular vote despite widespread and documented corruption and ineffective governance.

The rise of atavistic nationalism in Turkish Cypriot politics was facilitated by Denktash's self-promoted war hero image and the support of the armed forces that reported to – as they still do – Turkey. Ultimately, this process allowed for an individual to establish a virtual throne that went uncontested despite widespread nepotism, corruption, and authoritarian behavior including the suppression of the civil society and the media (Duzgun 2000, 296; Isachenko 2012, 109). Such a process supports the ethno-symbolic conceptualization of nationalism where the notion of the 'nation' is created, reinforced, and perpetuated using symbolism ('Motherland', war hero, etc.), melded with both an imaginary ideal (the Ottoman times) and an 'imminent' threat (forceful reintegration and oppression). Furthermore, this also supports the assertion that nationalism is less about loyalty to a flag or a group that existed primordially and instead more about where a person might find economic prosperity and security (Isachenko 2012).

The essential question, then, is as such: how did the prominence of atavistic nationalism help shape the evolution of the Turkish Cypriot political system? It was not until huge economic crises that undermined both the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot economies in 2000 and 2002, which decreased their ability to use day-saving economic aid and plunder to band-aid the festering wound that was a mishandled and unproductive economic policy, that significant opposition was able to rise (Loizides 2015, 181). Furthermore, these crises coincided with the Annan Plan negotiations in Cyprus, where the Turkish Cypriots had the illusory hope of being reintegrated with the international community both economically and socially by reintegrating with the Republic of Cyprus and becoming members of the EU. The popular perception went that if the Turkish Cypriot community accepted a reintegration as proposed, they would receive economic and social benefits even if the plan failed. Furthermore, they held the chance of full EU membership should they reintegrate (Loizides 2015, 181). As such, the opportunity – mainly economic – posed by reintegration exceeded the nationalist rhetoric's ability to threaten or provide hope. Therefore, a considerable opposition gathered, and the non-nationalist parties capitalized on this momentum, displacing Denktash (Isachenko 2012, 146). Eventually, the Turkish Cypriots voted overwhelmingly to affirm the Annan Plan in a communal referendum.

However, after the Republic of Cyprus rejected the Plan and entered the EU as a full member, the Turkish Cypriots' lot did not improve. Indeed, increased democratization and Europeanization did not generate either recognition or prosperity, which undermined the newly-generated trust in the international community, the reformist elites, and the local and international CSOs (Isachenko 2012, 112). Ultimately, this undermined the new narrative of prosperity through democratization and Europeanization, allowing for a nationalist resurgence, whereby the *status quo ante* – i.e. nepotism, corruption, repression, executive overreach – re-emerged. Meanwhile, due to the schism with the Turkic atavism and the efforts of the opposition in asserting a distinctly Cypriot identity, a new atavistic narrative against Turkish immigrants was created. Due to this new atavism, the immigrants to NC are discriminated against and not integrated, and there is political polarization which has stopped the democratic gears in the NC.

Overall, atavistic nationalism emerged as the result of the ruling elites' ability to create a self-perpetuating, vote-earning system: firstly, they controlled natural resources and international aid, thus creating patronage networks to either bind or co-opt or subvert critical opposition elites; secondly, they effectively utilized symbolism, fear, and hope – as well as the media and educational facilities that they controlled – to promote nationalist voting blocs among the populace. Furthermore, while the former dynamic is de facto nepotism and corruption, which normally causes loss of votes and thus political power, the latter dynamic allowed for such actions to be tolerated, as war heroes deserved exceptional treatment. As such, the nationalists that held power during the violent era of the Cypriot Conflict extended their power into a new, more pluralistic era. This only changed when the patron-client system ran out of resources while the 'fear' of unsustainable economics and the 'hope' of better trading opportunities displaced the nationalist narrative. Nevertheless, the system and institutions built around atavistic nationalism allowed for the easy re-emergence of the nationalist wing at the first failure of the alternative elites, demonstrating the persistence of the nationalist wing whence in power. Moreover, counter-atavism is just as destructive: it is discriminatory against identified 'others' and has further polarized the Turkish Cypriot community.

Taiwan (Republic of China)

Taiwan – officially named the Republic of China (ROC) – is an unrecognized state situated in the South China Sea. It seceded from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1945, although both the ROC and the PRC officially claim to represent all of China – and the latter threaten military measures in case the former officially declares independence, defying the One China Policy (Chu 1996, 80). Both its non-recognition and the evolution of its nationalism are unique, which render Taiwan a critical case within this study.

Taiwan – made up of three islands in the South China Sea – was under the colonial control of the Japanese until 1943, where its administration was taken over by China, which had an ancestral claim to the islands. However, not only did the Mainlander Chinese discriminate against the 'Japan-ified' Taiwanese, but they also ruled the island with iron fists. This created a Mainlander vs. Native divide that was an unbridgeable chasm until 1979. The Taiwanese were excluded from higher government positions and the Kuomintang (KMT – the Chinese political party in a single-party system) appointed its members to the legislature for lifelong terms. Furthermore, the fist of the KMT got heavier as the power-holders of the Mainland lost their Civil War against the Communist Party of China and had to retreat to Taiwan. The KMT was paranoid regarding the spread of 'the communist disease'. They, therefore, enacted complete repression as well as Martial Law, which led to many casualties and arbitrary arrests through a military response to widespread protests in Taiwan. For decades, the KMT ran roughshod whereas the natives took their politics – and their resistance –underground, waiting for an opportune moment while building their capacity (Chu 1996; Gold 1986, 52).

Until the mid-70s, due to the effects of the Cold War, whereby Taiwan posed as a crucial ally against Chinese Communism, the West not only recognized the ROC as the sovereign of all of China, but they also did not scrutinize domestic Taiwanese affairs. This allowed for widespread human rights abuses, authoritarianism, and repression (Chu 1996, 76). However, as the communist threat faded, so did the stock of the KMT. The ROC started to rapidly lose recognition and its sponsor, the USA, debated aid to Taiwan on the grounds of the KMT's human rights violations. This created the political space for the underground Taiwanese network to emerge into power openly (Phillips 2016, 672).

While the military power was still held by the Mainlanders, which disallowed violent means of revolution, the state's repressive capacity had declined due to the removal of Western support (Chou and Nathan 1987; Phillips 2016, 668). Furthermore, the oppressed Taiwanese majority had gained economic might external to the government and was well-organized. As such, when widespread protests in Kaohsiung were met with repression in late 1979, the detractors went even further and the KMT realized that its iron fist policies were not sustainable. This held especially true as Chiang Kai-Shek, the founder around whom the Mainlander patronage networks revolved, had passed away. Therefore, the new KMT leadership was willing to compromise. Successive democratic reforms followed, including the lifting of the Martial Law in 1986, allowing for the formation of a second party, the holding of popular elections in 1996, and the first peaceful transfer of power in 2000.

There were two attempts at utilizing atavistic nationalism in the case of Taiwan; one was both ineffective and negative, whereas the other was the exact opposite. To begin with, the Chinese Mainlanders saw themselves as above the natives. As such, they positioned themselves against the PRC as well as the native majority. Furthermore, this narrative ignored the fears of the Taiwanese vis-à-vis re-colonization and repression

(based on their experience with the Japanese). Instead, the narrative focused on promoting threat perceptions regarding China and the communist disease, while also giving hope that the ROC would experience a future resurgence and regain control of all of China. Further facilitated by the founder's establishment of a patronage network that was almost completely exclusive to the Mainlanders, this nationalist narrative succeeded in promoting a distinctly Chinese identity in the Mainlanders, which excluded the Taiwanese. Not surprisingly, this type of atavistic nationalism, where a minority not only distinguishes itself from but also aims to suppress the majority, failed once the latter gained power. Instead, this attempt at nationalism caused the creation of a Taiwanese national narrative.

Indeed, the Taiwanese did not develop a distinct sense of self as a nation until after their experiences with the KMT. When they did, as instrumentalized by opposition politicians, they positioned themselves against both the PRC and the KMT (Chu, Diamond, and Templeman 2016, 13). Fearing a return to Mainlander dictatorship or the loss of popular political power, the Taiwanese instead pursued and succeeded in democratization (Phillips 2016). Furthermore, this narrative included hopes: of the Taiwanese for gaining political power; of avoiding reintegration with China; and of pushing for recognition. Meanwhile, due to the lingering Mainlander influence in politics, Chinese threats (requiring the incorporation of Chinese concerns into the body politique), and the fact that the Taiwanese were divided within (there are three native groups) allowed for the emergence of a civic type of atavistic identity (Phillips 2016). Currently, this narrative is suffering from polarization, however, vis-à-vis how to deal with China: whether the Taiwanese should push for independence or create cooperative ties with the economic giant next door (Diamond 2001; Zuo 2016). Nevertheless, the intra-group differences and the power balance among the groups, coupled with the lack of the myth of a primordial Taiwanese nation, will likely ensure that the narrative remains civic.

Analysis: Two Evolutionary Paths of Atavistic Nationalism

Both cases explored in this article differ greatly regarding their geographical position, demographic outlook, and economic performance. Aside from not being landlocked – which is an important variable regarding state-building dynamics – the two other common points among them were non-recognition and the use of atavistic nationalism for nation-building. Nevertheless, the cases of atavistic nationalism in North Cyprus and Taiwan demonstrated both significant similarities and significant differences, which are analytically important for understanding the evolution of similar narratives arising in the Western democracies and Asia – among others. The findings of the present study validate the model of atavistic nationalism that was adopted herein.

Firstly, the movements towards creating an atavistic nationalist identity covered in these cases – regardless of whether they resulted in an ethnic or civic interpretation – thrived on a tripartite where the 'us' was threatened by not only more powerful, external 'others' but also less powerful, internal 'others'. The former ranged from parent states to the international community at large, whereas the latter ranged from immigrant populations to domestic 'traitors'. This positioning allowed for the assumption of victimhood and potential threat narratives.

Secondly, the movements towards atavism utilized both fear-based and hope-based rhetoric – pointing out real, perceived, or even hypothetical (faith-based) possibilities – to underline the importance of ethnic nationalism. On the one hand, the threats served the functions of not only isolating the targeted community from the identified others but also for having an easy target to scapegoat, such as the disempowered immigrant populations, for the community's woes. On the other hand, the elusive hope functioned to justify the measures taken by the nationalists to get to the desired future by any means possible and to help the community endure hardships 'for a better tomorrow'. However, while the similarities suggested by the model were indeed observed, there were further findings that fell outside the scope of the model: patronage networks.

Indeed, the analyzed attempts at defining nationalism in an atavistic fashion revolved around a 'heroic' figure – the prototype (Volkan 1998) – and the patron-client relationships built around his patronage. These figures espoused a stance of strength and came from the traditionally-powerful class and gender: a well-educated, Turkic Cypriot male; and a Mainlander male leader with political and military backgrounds. Furthermore, they centralized the control of the state's economic resources which they used to 'cement' alliances and to co-opt 'moderate' opposition. This high level of bought support, coupled with their unimpeachable 'heroism', made them untouchable and rendered their opposition immoral by default, which facilitated the nationalist narrative.

Furthermore, in both cases, state-controlled institutions played a critical role. Indeed, in both North Cyprus and Taiwan, the government used media and education to disseminate the idea that the 'us' was inherently Turkic or Chinese/Taiwanese, respectively. Moreover, in Taiwan, the official state language and the educational language both were adjusted to be Chinese to promote Sino nationalism, whereas the same was done to promote nativist nationalism. Therefore, it appears that atavistic nationalism requires the support of a powerful league of political elites' promotion, as well as the use of state-controlled institutions, to take hold. Then, what do the differences among the cases reveal?

First and foremost, 'cultural homogeneity' – real or perceived – matters. Indeed, atavistic nationalism was an easier sell within communities that had more inherent unity – such as the Turkish Cypriots, Mainlanders, or the Native Taiwanese.

Secondly, international scrutiny and international economic ties also matter. In the case of North Cyprus, Turkish support for or against the nationalist narrative proved vital. Meanwhile, vis-à-vis Taiwan, the support of the USA and the West, who acted as both sponsors and trade partners of the regime, were critical in determining whether Chinese nationalism stayed or whether Taiwanese nationalism arose due to their role as human rights watchdogs.

Thirdly, the intra-'us'-group divisions, their extent, and their nature matter greatly. The Northern Cypriots were divided along political lines vis-à-vis a potential resolution to the Cypriot Conflict, which was ethnicized as the fate of the Turkish immigrants and the future demographics of a united Cyprus were at stake. As such, the Turkish Cypriot community was further divided along pro-reintegration/Cypriotic and pro-status quo/Turkic lines. Such a polarization on incompatible grounds has long caused a decline of Turkish Cypriot democracy, where the essential public debate has been lost to the fear of Turkification or reintegration. Meanwhile, in Taiwan, the Chinese identity waned, as a group that was born and raised in the islands rather than the Mainland emerged and as external support to the KMT regime was pulled. Contrarily, the majoritarian, nativist nationalism took hold; however, as the majority was divided into three and the anti-China/pro-independence sentiment did not necessarily take deep roots, the 'us' was divided along 'policy' lines. Therefore, unlike the Northern Cypriot case, while the community was polarized to an extent, the nationalism aligned with civic principles. This was also aided by extensive trade relations with democratic partners.

CONCLUSION: ATAVISTIC NATIONALISM AND POLICY CHOICES

According to the present study, atavistic nationalism appears to arise only when there is a vacuum created by a systemic shock – be it diplomatic, militaristic, or economic – which has created a sense of threat and hopelessness among the populace at large. In the West and Asia, the economic crisis of 2008 and then of 2020 has precipitated this systemic shock. Indeed, as the globe experienced economic decline and thus relative deprivation, the promises of security and prosperity upon which multicultural democracy is based were perceived to have failed. Welfare chauvinism, coupled with skepticism regarding multiculturalism, meant that a new, more exclusive definition of 'us' became necessary 'to protect the community from the moochers/immigrants and the sell-out ideologues'. Facilitated by the post-9/11 global conjecture and inherent racism, the atavistic nationalism that we observe today was born from economic woes – real or perceived. Predatorial elites can capitalize on this opportunity of a need for atavism by stoking fears and promising illusive hope – especially if these elites are symbolic of traditional power-holders that are not 'traditional elites'; most likely male and of a prominent background.

Furthermore, if there are deep ideological, intragroup cleavages, there appears a higher likelihood that atavistic nationalism will not be widely adopted – such as in the case of Taiwan. However, if ethno-ideological divisions are persistent in the community, where the groups are relatively balanced in power, dysfunctional hyper-polarization along competing nationalist lines appears to become more probable, as in the case of NC. Lastly, in the case of elevated levels of intragroup homogeneity, atavistic nationalism seems to more easily take hold. Importantly, should atavistic nationalism become systemic, benefit networks, educational facilities, and media revolving around perpetuating the prominence of this narrative will be enacted and will have lasting effects.

The success of Taiwan in breaking away from destructive atavism – as well as the temporary success that Turkish Cypriots likewise saw in the early 2000s – can be attributed to extensive, positive engagement with the international community. Indeed, the more these states traded and/or entered a cooperation with democratic partners, the less they were likely to pursue unitary identities – especially when the economy thrived under plurality. As such, the international community should seek to reinforce interdependence – i.e. ties of economic and political cooperation – especially with those countries that appear susceptible to atavistic narratives.

Atavistic nationalism poses a threat to the political systems that we have come to take for granted – if the scholars and policymakers choose to ignore, isolate, or not engage with this type of narrative. However, such narratives do not necessarily lead to authoritarianism. While further cases must be explored to explain the systemic underpinnings of atavistic nationalism, the cases outlined in this article have shown two evolutionary possibilities of atavism. It will be up to the international community to choose where to go from here.

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IMMIGRANT PLAYERS IN THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM OF GERMANY AND THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract: *This paper is based on the research related to the immigrant players in the national football team and the formation of national identity in Germany. Recent analyses reveal that the success of an immigrant player in the national sports team has been regarded as a useful factor to attract public attention to the contribution of immigrants to the progress of the country. During the matches, discourses coming from the fans depending on the result of the game. They target immigrant players as a scapegoat in the situation of loss. Indeed, this is visible in parallel with the increasing strong critics in the media against these immigrant players. In this paper, the case of Mesut Özil in the German National Football Team is analyzed. The case study offers evidence of whether the success of immigrant players has been an important factor for their inclusion in the national identity in Germany.*

Keywords: *Immigrant Players; Success; Integration; German Identity; Mesut Özil*

INTRODUCTION

In the literature, the research on the sport and identity formation is found mainly on the function of sports matches. Notable research followed both the function of the sport matches and their connection to society. Thus, how this connection created debates on identity and nationality through new public communication tools are important research focuses. While the research pointed to the minor influence of the media[1] from the early formation, their analyzes clarified that its effect significantly increased for the identity formation in the historical evolution process. So, in the historical development process, starting from newspapers and magazines, the development of radio and TVs expanded the national sports teams' area of popularity for shaping the national identity. Moreover, in the contemporary world, the development of internet technology and social media provided a better ground for the players of the national teams' to interact with a society that opens new channels for shaping the national identities.

This paper aims to analyze the function of the success of the immigrant players in the national football team of Germany for inclusion in the national identity formation. In this regard, the role of media in the agenda-setting and molding the public opinion and its influence on the widening of the existing hegemonic perspectives on national identity are given an emphasis. As the research topic clarifies, in line with Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony,[2] an analysis is conducted on the function of the success of the immigrant players in the national football team of Germany for inclusion in the national identity formation concerning the role of media. In this sense, concerning the media, from newspapers to magazines as well as radio, TV, and social media, analysis is made to present their functions of national identity formation through bringing the national sports games as well as players into the public agenda. In the qualitative methodological base, literature review, research, and analysis of the media discourses are conducted. Thus, a theoretically informed, empirical analysis over the role of the success of immigrant players in the national football team of Germany for inclusion in the national identity formation, concerning the media's contribution, is presented.

First, major debates will be given over the historical development of the relationship between social identity and sport about the function of the media and its widening hegemonic perspectives over the national football games in Germany. Later, the case of Mesut Özil in the German National Football Team is presented as the case of players' interaction with the media, national institutions, and hegemonic identity

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[1] In this study, the media is referred as a space, including radio, TV, newspaper, magazines, the internet and social media that create connection among the people.

[2] Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony refers the formation of hegemonic perspective of bourgeoisie based on their values, ideas, worldviews and expectations over the lower classes. In this sense, the media is regarded as a place for the formation of hegemony through directing the society to certain understandings (Heywood 1994, 100).

perspective. Overall, with this study a theoretically informed empirical analysis over the function of the media is given, not only its effect over influencing the national identity in relation with the sports, but directing the public behavior to the desired way over immigrant players of the national football team of Germany.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY AND SPORT IN GERMANY

When the post-WWII is analyzed, during the reconstruction of Europe after a very destructive war, the sports had a positive impact, especially for the national identity formation. The gymnastics and various physical exercises were used as a part of the nationalist and identity constructing perspectives that were regarded as the responsibility of each nation to govern this area for the physical well-being of its citizens (Goksoyr 2010, 268-294). While this has been true for many European countries, because of Germany's Nazi past of dealing nationalism with racist actions, the nationalist dimension of the sport was not taken into account in public arenas but rather it was regarded as a sporting activity of Germany's youth.

Moreover, with the 2000s, following the global trend, sport and the success of the national football team in the international competitions gradually turn into a source of pride for Germany's public. This is also related to Germany's success in the development policy and becoming the EU's major economic power as it made Germany a global player in the world's economic and political matters. The most important indicator, in this case, is the 2006 World Cup that was organized in Germany. Different from the earlier period, the World Cup in 2006 was the scene of German youth's visibility in Germany's matches. This visibility was with waving the flag of Germany, painting their faces with the colors of the German flag, and rediscovering their German identity through the success stories of their national football team (Hyde 2006).

As it was argued, Germany was the major economic power in Europe in the 2000s with the effect of high industrial growth. This had a root of migrations coming from Southern and Eastern Europe, especially from Italy, Greece, and Turkey. Starting from the 1950s, migration from these countries gradually increased that brought young workers for Germany's industrial development (Milewski 2007, 859-896). While these workers were first regarded as 'Gastarbeiter' (guest workers), because of their further presence in the country as well as increasing their public visibility brought a new integration problem for Germany's public sphere.

Furthermore, from education to social life, this integration problem has been a major obstacle for Germany's inability of absorbing these workers in Germany's national identity formation. However, sports provided a new ground for the immigrant workers and their children to have visibility and interaction with the German public with their contribution to the success of the competing teams in both national and international

arenas. While these immigrant children were having a problem of visibility in education and economic arenas, they discovered the area of sport for having public visibility with their success (Kleindienst-Cachay 2011, 92-108).

As the German football players with Turkish roots of the German national team, this period brought important stars that were actively contributing to Germany's success in football in the international arena. These are Mehmet Scholl played between 1995 and 2002, Mustafa Doğan played from 1999 to 2003, Serdar Taşçı played from 2008 to 2010, Mesut Özil played from 2008 to 2018, İlkay Gündoğan plays from 2012, Emre Can play from 2016 and Kerem Demirbay plays from 2017 (Karli 2018). These examples provide evidence of the contribution of the immigrant players to German national teams' success in international competitions.

IMMIGRANT PLAYERS AND GERMAN IDENTITY DEBATE: THE CASE OF MESUT ÖZİL

In the historical process, the German national football team has been a place of German football players with Turkish roots. Many of them have not been active face in newspapers and magazines with their political comments and having the target of German media concerning the German identity perspective. An exception here is Mesut Özil whose decision to start playing in the German national football team has created critical discussions since 2009. In the early phase of his football career, he found himself in the national identity discussions between Turkey and Germany those created debates in the media of both countries. As a German with Turkish roots born in Gelsenkirchen in 1988, Mesut Özil had a life cycle that brought him to be a football player. Since 1995, starting from 'DJK Westfalia 04 Gelsenkirchenand' later 'DJK Teutonia Schalke-Nord' and 'DJK Falke Gelsenkirchen', Özil continued his football career in 2000 at 'Rot-Weiss Essen' and with the influence of his father he continued his career at 'Schalke 04'.[3] Later, he transferred to 'Werder Bremen'. This followed his first international football team experience out of Germany as transferring to 'Real Madrid' in 2010. Since 2013, he has been playing at 'Arsenal FC'. Concerning playing at the national teams, he started his national football team career with the German young national football team. His notable success was during UEFA European Under-21 Championship in Sweden in 2009. During the final match, Germany vs. England, he scored a goal against England and Germany won 4-0 against England. After the match, he was declared as the "star of the show" in the German media (Chase 2009).

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[3]According to Soner Yalçın (2018), when Özil was playing at Schalke 04, he wanted to play in a Turkish team. He applied to both Galatasaray and Beşiktaş in 2005. However, both teams did not offer any contract for him with the comments of him as "This kid is skinny as a worm; do not have a football player type". So, he went back to Germany without trying his chance with Fenerbahçe.

Concerning the decision of German football players with the Turkish root to play either German or Turkish national football teams, the famous politicized competition was over Mesut Özil. In 2009, Özil declared his decision on playing in the German national football team. Özil explained his decision by expressing that "I was born here, grew up here, and my football is German" (Yinanç 2018). While this was welcomed with great support in the German media, it had critics in the Turkish media that lead critics to the coach of the Turkish national football team, Fatih Terim. Thus, the critics in the Turkish media were that Terim was not interesting in Özil's play in the Turkish National Football Team (Toroğlu 2010).

However, against this criticism Terim's response was related to questioning these players' national consciousness. Thus, he reflected his idea of these players being regarded as traitors by the Turkish public. Terim mentioned:

> I have 30-40 files that say 'No' to the invitation letter we sent. Some players are not even 17 years old. We take measures to protect them as they should not be disturbed, with the questions of 'Why they did not choose the national team.' We do not allow an 18-year-old boy to negotiate with the jersey of the national team. It is the jersey of the national team. We have to keep the quality and the honor of it (Haber 7 2010).

As it is seen from Terim's arguments, this threatening perspective as being a traitor because of not showing up at the Turkish national football team is visible. Moreover, concerning the immigrant players' being on the national team of Germany, it was also regarded as important for the integration of them in the overall public sphere of Germany. Thus, after the decision to play in the German national football team, Özil mentioned that "this decision does not mean that I deny my Turkish origin. I feel that I have duties in the integration process of immigrants" (Danışman 2009). In this sense, Özil's argument shows that he also agrees that contributing to the success of the German national football team is a positive approach to the integration of immigrants that have been in cohesion with German media at that time based on immigrants' contributing to society with their success.

In the political sphere, Özil's decision was embraced with great support in Germany. The notable arguments came from Maria Böhmer, Minister of State for Integration in the Federal Chancellery, and regarded this as a good sign of the integration and immigrant's contribution to Germany. Also, the Green Party declared Özil as an important example to everybody in Germany. Having a Turkish root Gül Keskinler, who is responsible for integration within the German Football Federation (DFB), argued:

> we have young people here (in Germany), schooling, unemployed, but some children cannot improve themselves because of their families,

children who cannot come to certain (work) places. For them, Serdar, Mesut, these favorite names have great importance. And it's a good example for them to be like Mesut (Danışman 2009).

As the first world cup experience, Özil played in the German national football team during the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. He scored the first goal of the national team against Ghana. He contributed to Germany's coming in third in the World Cup. As a result of the impressive performance during the FIFA World Cup, Özil started to have more visibility in the mainstream German media with his life and success stories. Wigbert Löer (2010) in his column in Stern portrays Özil as a German-Turk. He argues that "he feels like a Turk and speaks Turkish at home. His fathers had given him the choice, and so Özil said one day the national coach, 'I want to wear the German jersey.' He never had to think about that, he says" (Löer 2010). In this regard, the article bases on Özil's contribution to the national team even as 'they speak Turkish at home' and not belonging to a traditional German family. This shows a positive approach to Özil because of his success story in the national team.

Moreover, during the Germany vs. Turkey football match of EURO 2012 qualifying, Germany won 3-0 against Turkey and Özil scored a goal at the 79th minutes of the match against Turkey. However, he did not celebrate his success after the goal. Özil at the German national team was booed by the fans of the Turkish national team by regarding Özil as being Turkish but serving to the German national team. At the same time, Özil was criticized by the German football fans of the national team as he did not sing the German National Anthem (Oran and Çopur 2014, 133-160). In this sense, he has been on the point of critics on both sides. However, while this was true to the matches between Turkey and Germany, for Germany's other matches, Özil was followed by the Turkish public and supported as the source of pride because of his Turkish roots. Furthermore, Özil successfully contributed to the German national football team during the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

During the tournament, Özil scored one goal and 3 assists. Thus, Özil became an important game builder and contributed to Germany's becoming the world champion as a result of the tournament. During the tournament, Özil was on the screen of German media. Rather than emphasizing his Turkish origin, the discourses in the mainstream media have been on Özil as "Der Deutsche Nationalspieler Mesut Özil (the German national player Mesut Özil)" (RPOnline 2014). Because of his success stories during the World Cup tournament, Özil's motivational arguments brought into fore that shows a solidarity circle around the national team. Thus, Özil argued that "we can beat any team if we do our best. We can become a legend by becoming the first European team in South America to win a World Cup" (RPOnline 2014). Furthermore, after the World Cup championship of Germany, mainstream media of Germany continued to give news from Özil.

Thus, Spiegel (2014) brought Özil's interview in the Daily Telegraph to the agenda by regarding Özil as the world champion and the most expensive German player in the world as he was playing in FC Arsenal. It shows that the success of Özil himself and his contribution to the German national football team affected his acceptance of the national identity. He became the source of pride for Germany's football history because he caused the emergence of significant discussions around the world.

The next international competition for Germany's national football team is the Euro 2016 Cup organized in France. This time the Euro 2016 Cup coincided with the Muslim holy month Ramadan. Before the tournament, a specific discussion of the German media related to Mesut Özil was the impossibility of fasting during Ramadan, which is at the time of the Euro 2016 Cup. As an example, Tagesspiegel (2016) with the headline "Mesut Özil: 'Impossible to fast during the European Championship'" on 1 June 2016, shared the discussion of how Özil can be fasting during Ramadan by showing his picture in Mekka, where Özil went there in the same year for the pilgrimage. In this regard, by presenting Özil as an observant Muslim, the newspaper shared the thoughts on that professional players can fast out of Ramadan instead of the days during the religious month Ramadan. So, the expectation was shared with the public of Özil's not fasting during Ramadan by thinking about the success of the national team.

The German national football team could not achieve the desired goal to win the European championship in 2016. In the semi-final, Germany lost the match against France and took a leave from the tournament. Moreover, in the FIFA Confederation Cup organized in Russia, Germany won the 2017 FIFA Confederation Cup. It was Germany's first confederation cup. The German national football team participated in the tournament with the absence of important players including Mesut Özil. However, they succeeded to win the cup.

DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE 2018 WORLD CUP AND ÖZİL AS AN IMMIGRANT PLAYER

As it was mentioned, Özil's visit to Mekka in 2016 for the pilgrimage found a place in the mainstream media in Germany. This created specific critics as well as supportive arguments in social media discussions. At that time, Germany was struggling with the increasing numbers of refugees coming from Syria that created tension in German society as Germany is leading toward the Islamization process[4].

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[4]In the post-2011 process, after the protests and transformations started in the Middle East, Germany faced with a refugee flow as many other countries in Europe. The public discussion about this process was based on criticizing the Prime Minister Angela Merkel's policies to accept refugees and regarded the Muslim refugees as the terrorists of tomorrow. During this period, notable publications in relation to the media's interest published such as Thilo Sarrazin's "Deutschland schafft sich ab (Germany Is Doing Away With Itself)" (2010) and "Feindliche Übernahme: Wie

So, Özil's pictures in Mekka during the pilgrimage were circulated in the media created particular discussions as exclusionary and anti-Islam discourses that show the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Germany. An important example in this regard came from the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AFD)'s Saxony branch. Thus, Saxony district's executive of AFD, Andrea Kersten, regarded Özil's pilgrimage as an "anti-patriotic signal" (Hendrich 2016). According to Malte Lehming (2016), "Mesut Özil's pilgrimage to Mecca fascinates and irritates so many Germans." For Lehming, this irritation is related to Germany's cultural situation of having a distance from religion. Thus, society constitutes a secular society, and religious practices are not widely seen. Also, they do not see the important politicians and famous people to be in a religious ceremony that the strong religious emphasis of Özil with his pilgrimage to Mekka is the main reason for this fear and irritation.

Moreover, another wide criticism of Özil came after Özil met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in London in May 2018. At this meeting, German national players Mesut Özil and İlkay Gündoğan met with President Erdoğan. During that time Turkey was under the presidential election process that is regarded in the German public opinion as to the support of them to Erdoğan who was also a candidate in the elections. Even not only Özil but also Gündoğan met with Erdoğan, the specific criticism turned to Özil because of his position as a publicly known religious figure that leads to being classified as a pro-Erdoğan conservative Turk. The President of DFB, Reinhard Grindel, criticized this meeting and argued on Twitter that "of course, the DFB respects the special situation of our players with a migration background, but football and the DFB stand for values that are not sufficiently respected by Mr. Erdoğan" (Focus 2018).

Grindel's position of criticizing both players and talking about the values of DFB cannot be thought out of the political tension between Turkey and Germany during that time. Thus, the majority of Germany's social and political spheres regarded the post-2013 Gezi Park Protest time in Turkey as an authoritarian nation that gradually diminished the social and political rights of the citizens. In this regard, the public perspective on Turkish politics was based on supporting the opposition and being against Erdoğan's political way of creating distance between Turkey and Europe. Therefore, a German national football player was expected to follow this general understanding and for an immigrant player, it is a signal of the integration into German society. Thus, Grindel also argued that this behavior of these players shows "the integration work of the DFB certainly did not help our two players with this action" (Focus 2018). This shows that rather than a place of football, the national football team is regarded in Germany as a place of reflection of social and political values that were expected to be respected by the players within.

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der Islam den Fortschritt behindert und die Gesellschaft bedroht (Hostile takeover – how Islam impairs progress and threatens society)" (2018).

Concerning this, another notable criticism came to both players about their approaching Erdoğan as their president. Thus, after the meeting of Özil and Güldoğan with President Erdoğan, a signed jersey was shared from the official Twitter account of Erdoğan's party AKP stating that "With respect for my president" (Spiegel 2018). This was criticized by Bundestag member Cem Özdemir, who has also a Turkish origin, that "the President of a German national player is called Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Chancellor Angela Merkel and Parliament is called the German Bundestag (...) It sits in Berlin, not in Ankara" (Spiegel 2018).

Özdemir's arguments are important in the context of regarding players on the national football team as accepting and respecting the identity perspective of the national team's belonging country. This shows how important function has the national football team for the formation of the identity. Moreover, this requires also to have a patriotic stance. Since Özil has met with Erdoğan more than five times from 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2018, but the only 2018 meeting irritated the society and the politicians (Krause *et al.* 2018). In this sense, it depends on the level of the relationship of both countries as 2018 has been in a tense year between Turkey and Germany because Turkey imprisoned some German journalists (e.g. Deniz Yücel) that were followed by society. After all, the German media brought these tensions to the public agenda.

According to Mesut Özil, "certain German newspaper" used the photo for right propaganda, "to advance their political interests" (Tagesschau 2018). Özil also mentions that after these negative advertisements of media, sponsorship agreements of an official sponsor brand was canceled. For Özil, "It was no longer good for them to be seen with me, they called this situation 'crisis management'" (Tagesschau 2018). Besides, the manager of the coach of German national football team Joachim Löw, Harun Aslan mentioned that Özil went to meet President Erdoğan with his own will. For him, it was an invitation and could be refused if Özil wanted not to meet Erdoğan (NTV 2018). After 24 June 2018, presidential election in Turkey, Erdoğan became the President of Turkey and in the mainstream German media, Özil's meeting with Erdoğan before this election was regarded as instrumentalized to increase Erdoğan's popularity (Welt 2019).

Moreover, following these critiques, Germany's early farewell to the World Cup in 2018 pointed to Özil with the arguments about his poor performance. These excessive critics over Özil are being regarded as Özil to be made Germany's "scapegoat" (Watson 2018). According to Özil's father Mustafa Özil "It's always said that if we win, we win together, but if we lose, we lose because of Özil. He's booed and put up as a scapegoat – I completely understand that he is offended" (Watson 2018). As a result of these all developments, on 23 July 2018, Özil declared in his Twitter account his resignation from Germany's national football team with his long explanations. The critics after his meeting with President Erdoğan seem the most important reason for this decision.

In his statement, Özil mentions that he found the treatment of DFB unfair after he met with Erdoğan and it affected him to not play anymore in the German national team's jersey. Thus, by making direct reference to the President of DFB, Reinhard Grindel, Özil argues:

> People with racially discriminating backgrounds should not be allowed to work in the largest football federation in the world that has players from dual-heritage families. Attitudes like theirs simply do not reflect the players they supposedly represent. In the eyes of Grindel and his supporters, I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose (…) It is with a heavy heart and after much consideration that because of recent events I will no longer be playing for Germany at the international level whilst I have this feeling of racism and disrespect. I used to wear a German shirt with such pride and excitement, but now I don't. I feel unwanted and think that what I have achieved since my international debut in 2009 has been forgotten (…) I will no longer stand for being a scapegoat for his incompetence and inability to do his job properly (…) I am disappointed, but not surprised by [Grindel's] actions (…) But when high-ranking DFB officials disrespect my Turkish roots and selfishly turn me into political propaganda, then enough is enough (Bryant 2018).

Moreover, not only about the official institutions in Germany, but he also reflected some people's racially discriminatory perspective in German society. Özil revealed in his explanations that he received many comments, e-mails, and messages, including hate speech against him and his family. Thus, Özil gave an example of a German fan told him after the match against Sweden during the World Cup in 2018 that "Özil, fuck off you Turkish shit, piss off you Turkish pig" (Bryant 2018). In Özil's perspective, this represents the old Germany that he is not finding a place for himself. So, this treatment shows the effect of the success in the German national football team for inclusion in the national identity perspective. After Özil's these explanations, some responses came from sports arenas and institutions related to sport in Germany. Thus, President of Bayern Munich Uli Hoeness argued:

> Özil has been playing shit for years. He won his last tackle before the 2014 World Cup. All he is doing in the field is playing cross passes. Now he hides himself and his crap performance behind this photo… Whenever we played against Arsenal, we played over him, because we knew he was the weak point (Bryant 2018).

Moreover, DFB denied racism claims of Özil against them and mentioned that Özil made great contributions to the 2014 World Cup. But his photos with Erdoğan raised questions from many people, and they had to make comments about it (Bryant

2018). Overall, Özil's arguments with his resignation from the German national football team and the counter-arguments against his claims show that the success of Özil on the national team was the major determinant of his being regarded as a German by the mainstream media of Germany.

CONCLUSION

As the case study of this paper reveals, Mesut Özil started to play at the German national football team in 2010 and made notable contributions to Germany's winning the world cup in 2014. This success of Özil brought him to the scene as one of the most popular players and was regarded at that time in the mainstream German media as the most valuable German football player in the world. However, because of Germany's unsuccessful time during the Euro 2016 Cup and the 2018 World Cup, major critics came to the immigrant players as the scapegoats of the team. In this regard, Özil started to be visible in the media with the pictures of his pilgrimage to Mekka in 2016 and his meeting with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and his religious personality. While his German identity was popularly mentioned during the successful times of the German national football team, the discourses in the media and national institutions as well as in the public at the unsuccessful times referred to Özil's Turkish background. This resulted in Özil's resignation from the German national football team with his words, "I am a German when we win, but an immigrant when we lose" (Bryant 2018). Overall, these all research and analyses reveal that the success of a player with an immigrant background in the national football team is an important determinant of inclusion in the German national identity.

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ENERGY AND GEO-ECONOMICS: EVIDENCE UNDERPINNING RUSSIAN INTERVENTION IN SYRIA

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Abstract: *Since September 2015 and the Russian military intervention in the country, the interests in Syria have been numerous and of great importance for the actors involved in this conflict. The interests in Syria are numerous and of great importance for the actors involved in this conflict. Russia, like the Allies and opponents of the Bashar Al-Assad regime, is fighting for geopolitical, geo-economic, or ideological reasons. The Middle East region finds itself shaken by the sharp resurgence of a confrontation between actors allied to the United States, other allies of Russia, and this Syrian crisis thus impacts the geopolitical configuration of the region. This paper presents an analysis of the Russian intervention strategy in Syria. We argue that Russia intervened in Syria to strengthen the already existing Russian-Syrian alliance, to curb extremist proliferation, and to take advantage of Syria's strategic position. The objective is to determine the reasons for the Russian military intervention in Syria related to energy and geo-economic interests. The Russian intervention in Syria was an ideal opportunity to draw closer to several powerful states in the region and a way to benefit from positive spin-offs on its arms market and hydrocarbon road plans. Despite the risks and costs associated with defending the Syrian regime, Moscow has secured its political and economic power in the Middle East.*

Keywords: *Energy; Geo-Economics; Military Intervention; Russia; Syria*

INTRODUCTION

Having the largest natural gas reserves in the world and being the second-largest oil exporter, Russia is seeking to extend its influence and reach as many world markets as possible. Putin's administration also seeks to maintain and increase its economic power, particularly in Europe and the Middle East, while creating strong alliances. The Syrian conflict is said to have brought Russia closer to several Middle Eastern powers, presenting it with new economic opportunities. Thus, Russia seeks to maintain the energy dependence of several neighboring countries. Moreover, Vladimir Putin uses many ingenious and cunning strategies to achieve his objectives.

Its large gas resources, the efficiency of its distribution system, and its proximity to a large energy-deficient customer base make Russia a price generator for gas. Moscow has managed to use price reductions and long-term delivery contracts to push other states to support it in its political decisions.

To achieve its goals and maintain its ability to develop appropriate policies for its energy client states, Moscow continues to work to create and maintain a monopoly on the production, transmission, and distribution of resources. It is also successfully resolving political disagreements over the reduction of oil and gas exports. Second, it uses supply cuts as a foreign policy weapon against countries resisting Russia's increased influence in their political or economic affairs.

More than 20 states are involved in the Syrian civil war and hundreds of different armed groups were fighting on its territory. Allies of the Syrian regime, including Russia, Iran, and China, prevented the overthrow of the Syrian government with their military, political and economic support. The Syrian crisis has had disastrous repercussions not only on Syrian territory but also on the region. The persistent involvement of several actors during the many years of war in Syria has led several researchers to study the geostrategic importance of this state in the region. It has allowed them to consider the policies of Russia, Iran, and China along with other important countries' policies such as the USA, Israel, Turkey, France, UK, Saudi Arabia, UAE, in their studies of the new geopolitical configuration of the Middle East.

This paper will be to define the reasons behind the Russian intervention in the Syrian conflict. We will therefore try to deconstruct this analysis by studying both the economic and political cooperation sought by Russia and the other key states it is trying to get closer to achieve its objectives in Syria and the region.

ENERGY POTENTIAL AND RUSSIAN-SYRIAN COOPERATION

Russian Interests in the Hydrocarbons Sector

Before the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the country was one of the oil and gas producers in the Eastern Mediterranean. Most of its fields were in the east of the country, near the Iraqi border, or in the center of the country, east of the city of Homs. In 2010, 90% of its exports went to the European Union (Gobat and Kostial 2016). In addition to the damage caused during the conflict, both the EU and the US sanctions and embargoes on Syria no longer allowed these multinationals to continue production. Thus, much of the degradation of the Syrian economy can be attributed to the considerable deterioration of oil and gas exports, as well as the drastic decline in tourism, the two largest pre-war contributors of income to the country (Cordesman 2017).

Even with the multiple losses in the oil and gas sector, the Syrian army continues to prioritize the management of its energies, as well as the reconquest of its energy territories under the Islamic state. The latter is essential for electricity production to meet the needs of the Syrian population and to increase the country's economic rents. Moreover, it was also important for the regime and its allies to cut off the resources of the rebel groups. In addition to the refineries under the control of different factions, the production of crude oil in fields controlled by the Syrian government had fallen drastically. It has been estimated that oil rents fell by 98% of GDP between 2010 and 2014 (Gobat and Kostial 2016). Moreover, GDP fell from 4.7 to 0.14 billion dollars between 2011 and 2015 (Coface 2019). Thus, the lack of fuel caused a shortage of generated electricity, affecting the primary sector and the processing industry.

The year 2011 was marked by new opportunities in the oil and gas sector in Syria. Indeed, a new strip of natural gas has been discovered in the Homs region, contributing to the country's energy development (Aşcı 2018). New sources of oil were also discovered in 2015 in the controversial Golan Heights, a Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1981 (Nimmo 2019). Finally, the most important discovery is that found in the Levantine Basin, where Syria has an interesting future in the offshore oil and gas industry. This Syrian energy potential explains some of the reasons why states such as Russia are keen to become involved in Syria.

The multiple political turmoils that the Arab world has experienced in recent years has greatly overshadowed the accelerated exploration of the oil and gas potential of the Levantine Basin. Some Levantine countries have already begun to exploit their discoveries, but others, such as Syria, are backing off because of political conflict. A large source of hydrocarbons in the waters of the Syrian west coast has been discovered and projects for its exploitation have been initiated (Paraschos 2013).

Moreover, the Syrian Oil Minister has stated that Syria estimates that it holds 1250 billion m³ of gas along the country's Mediterranean coast. A 25-year contract was signed in 2013 between the Russian company 'Soyuz Nefte Gaz' and the Ministry of Oil and Mineral Resources for exploration along Syria's Mediterranean coast (Aşcı 2018). However, the prolongation of the war suspended the project in 2015, to resume in 2019 under less risky conditions. It is believed that such projects in Syria would be crucial for future Russian investment opportunities, as well as for the possibility of joint ventures in this sector. Undoubtedly, most of the profits will go to the Russian investor during the years of the agreement. However, Syria will be able to benefit from new infrastructure, an improvement in its oil industry, technology transfer, management training, and opportunities in the international market (Henderson 2013).

The importance of Syrian hydrocarbons alone does not justify Russian intervention in Syria. One important reason for its involvement in Syria is the geostrategic position of that state. Syria is the exit point from the energy routes to Europe. Also, the Middle East region contains most of the world's oil and gas resources. All countries wishing to exploit and export these resources by land must pass through Syria to get them to the most attractive market, which is Europe. Thus, Russian control of Syria's energy industry would give Moscow not only power over Syrian energy prices and delivery, but also influence in the Middle East region. Indeed, control over Syria's hydrocarbon energy lines is crucial for Russia, as it could give it the ability to influence energy prices in its favor.

The reconquest of the land taken by the Islamic State was not strictly a military objective. It was also a paramount strategically economic objective for the Russian intervention in Syria. Shares were promised to the Russian companies for each energy territory that came back under the control of the Syrian state (Pichon 2018).

Military and Strategic Cooperation

Russia has pledged to stand up to the international community to maintain Al-Assad, whose departure would prove disadvantageous for Russia and its oil and gas companies. Thus, Moscow continues to use its veto power and its international political power to support the government of Bashar Al-Assad to prevent Syria from suffering the same fate as Libya. The conflicts in Libya and Iraq have resulted in significant economic losses for Russia and have made it clear that such scenarios should not be repeated in Syria (Kozhanov 2016). Syria remains a key partner in the Russian arms market, even if its purchases do not match those of some Middle Eastern states. This trade is of importance for Russia since its arms exports have become the main source of employment in the military-industrial sector after the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time, Russia sought to resolve the conflict by leaving its Syrian ally in place, allowing a reduction in Russia's military role and legitimized its presence in Syria.

To this end, Russia has invested in rebuilding the institutions of the Syrian state, the regular army. Its diplomacy was aimed at bridging the gap between the regime and the 'acceptable' elements of the opposition who were prepared to accept a settlement in which Assad would remain in power (Hinnebush 2020). This remained unacceptable to a large part of the opposition as well as to the Western powers.

The commitment of Russian diplomacy during its intervention in Syria has shown the international community that any decision concerning Syria will have to go through Moscow. The presence of Russian armed forces in Syria was another opportunity to showcase their military capabilities. It should be added that this military presence made the 'no-fly zone' virtually impossible in Syria and also gave Russia its own EEZ for the use of its S-400 missile system and its missile cruiser Moskva (Machnikowski 2015). Russia has demonstrated and defended before the international community the principles of territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

The Russian operation has become "a demonstration of Russian power and a demand for a greater role in world affairs" (Bartenev 2018, 758). The Russian military presence dates to the 1970s and its intervention in Syria has significantly increased this presence thanks to its naval base in Tartous. Indeed, one of Russia's goals in Syria can be attributed to obtaining new military zones. The Syrian regime has granted Russia's army and private military troops military zones, to help to regain control of its lost territories (Souleimanov and Dzutsatti 2018). The continuation of the conflict required Russia to establish an airbase on Syrian territory to ensure the protection of Syrian airspace and the execution of military operations in the Mediterranean. Thus, Russia officially signed an agreement in August 2015, authorizing it to establish an airbase at Hmeimim in Latakia. This agreement authorizes the deployment of Russian aircraft and soldiers in Syria and the construction of new military bases in the country to launch military operations at the request of the Syrian regime (Hetou 2019). In October 2016, the agreement on the permanent control of the strategic airbase and the indefinite deployment of air forces was ratified.

In addition, this agreement doubles the space available for warships and guarantees the right to control an airbase. Its entry into force in January 2017, therefore, guarantees Russia sovereignty over its new zones, thus giving Russian forces full control over these territories. More than 63,000 Russian military personnel have received combat training in Syria, including more than 25,000 senior officers, 434 generals, and more than 4,300 artillery and rocket specialists (Daher 2018). New weapons developed by the Russians were used or tested in Syria, which may show that Syrian territory was as much a battlefield as it was a testing ground for Russian weapons. The alliance and the Russian presence in Syria have given Moscow access to the warm waters of the Mediterranean Sea as well as a geostrategic rapprochement with Syria's neighboring countries. Also, Syria's west coast lies on the Mediterranean coast, positioning it in an interesting and highly coveted center.

Moreover, the use of a naval base in Tartus, on Syria's Mediterranean coast, was granted to the Russians long before the conflict began. This base was granted to the Soviet Union in 1971, allowing them to avoid the passage through the Turkish Straits so much disputed by the USSR earlier. With the prolongation of the Syrian conflict, this base is a military-strategic tool of extreme importance serving both the Russians and the Syrians. Its operational capacity continues to strengthen, the Russian military intervention has led to the deployment of more than 1700 Russian military specialists and the dispatch of different types of warships and transport (Daher 2018). Thus, the Tartous Naval Base is in the process of becoming a permanent military naval base, as part of Russia's enlargement plans.

RUSSIA BETWEEN ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIP IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Russia has been able to draw closer to certain Middle Eastern powers since its involvement in the Syrian conflict. The relations it has built continue to bear fruit today.

Iran

Russia and Iran have competing interests in Syria and Assad's continued rule, for the time being, are one of their few points of convergence. So far, Iran has provided Assad with more boots on the ground and kept him afloat financially, while Russia has focused on political and air support. Assad cannot afford to lose either Iran or Russia, as they complement each other, and he has played both roles. Since the beginning of the financial crisis, Assad has been rising to maximize his falling margin of control (Shaar 2019). The Iranian case is an interesting and uncertain partnership for Russia. Iran is a strong ally of Al-Assad and its level of involvement is very broad and covers military, economic and political aspects. Nevertheless, it is easy to conceive of certain differences arising between Iran and Russia on military, energy, and post-conflict profit issues within Syria's borders. Both Russia and Iran are seeking power and geo-economic influence in the region. However, their discourse before the international community remains the same, regarding the maintenance of Bashar Al-Assad and the future of Syria.

The Syrian government signed a landmark pipeline agreement in July 2011 with Iran and Iraq, changing the planned pipeline map in the Middle East. This agreement was signed after Syria refused to accept Qatari gas and oil pipeline projects that would cross its territory, possibly to Europe, in 2009 (Ghoble 2017). The pipeline would pass through the Iranian port of Assalouyeh, then through Iraqi territory, through Damascus, and finally to Europe through the construction of new pipelines in the Mediterranean Sea. This project was to be completed in 3 years and cost nearly 10 billion dollars. Nevertheless, it had to be interrupted during the Syrian conflict. Such a project would have contributed to the export of Iranian gas and competition on the energy market

with Russian and Qatari gas (Sogoloff 2017). The sanctions imposed on Iran completely blocked this project since the products could not be sold to Europe. It is therefore here that one can understand the opportunities that Russia is seeking to exploit. Indeed, Iran remains Russia's best partner in the Middle East. Putin is keen to create agreements for the transport of Iranian gas with Russian energy companies. If Western sanctions are withdrawn, Iran will begin again to consider its project towards the European market (Aşcı 2018). Thus, Iran remains a great rival for Russia, so it is more profitable for Russia to create a partnership with Iran than to have it as a competitor. As a result, it also brings the Russians closer to their goal of European energy dependence.

In 2016, Russia reconsidered its strategic objectives in Syria, when the West did not seem to offer it interesting negotiation plans. This thus prompted the Kremlin to strengthen its support for the Syrian regime and to cooperate with Iran. Despite the hardening of Western policy in the face of Russian adventurism on the Syrian question, Russia has been maneuvering to ease Western sanctions against it.

However, on the military side, this Russian-Iranian partnership does not oblige Iranian-backed armed groups, in particular, the Al-Quds Force and Hezbollah, to carry out orders from Russia in the long term, despite the ground support they provide to Russian operations. On the one hand, it is not profitable for Moscow to refuse Iranian military-strategic assistance, as this would force Russia to significantly increase its ground presence on Syrian borders. On the other hand, Moscow is trying to remain vigilant in this partnership, which could affect its relations with other states that it is trying to maintain or improve (Kozhanov 2017).

A full-fledged military alliance with Iran could have consequences for Russian diplomacy towards Israel or the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). For the time being, the military-strategic partnership between the two countries is limited to information exchange and occasional coordination on Syrian territory.

Between 2016 and 2018, Moscow created the 5th and 6th Corps, which recruited different pro-government armed groups, amnestied rebels, and army defectors and integrated them into a strong military infrastructure under tight central government (and Russian) control. This was intended to diminish Iranian influence on militias and the Syrian military while strengthening the Syrian military as a critical state institution (Khlebnikov 2020).

The conflict in Syria now seems to be subsiding and discussions for reconstruction between allies of the Al-Assad regime are accelerating. As one of Al-Assad's main allies and a major contributor to its maintenance since the beginning of the conflict, Tehran is being presented with all kinds of opportunities in Syria at the end of the conflict. However, Moscow's notoriously successful involvement would have taken a large share of Iran's opportunities for profitable projects or forced it to share the profits with Russia. Taking this into account, Iran rushed to sign numerous protocols from the beginning of 2017 (Pichon 2018). It has managed to negotiate its place in the

reconstruction of Syria, by getting involved in sectors such as mobile telephone networks, mining, especially phosphate mining, the agricultural sector, and the port management of Latakia. Moreover, there have already been several Russian and Iranian foreign direct investments (FDI) in Syria since the beginning of the conflict, which seems positive for the immediate need for development aid. Moreover, Iran is preparing to take a leading role in the reconstruction of the country's pipelines and essential buildings, given that it is the largest producer of cement and iron in the Middle East (Al-Saadi 2015).

On the issue of investment sharing, the most significant will be the oil and gas industry, particularly the pipeline, which would change Moscow's plans (Kozhanov 2017). Moreover, Moscow seems dissatisfied with the proximity and power granted to Tehran in the management of the port of Latakia. Moscow and Tehran are trying to monopolize Syria's main sources of profits, provoking another competition between them. These two regional powers should also be ready to protect themselves against the possibility of American economic sanctions targeting their companies involved in reconstruction in Syria (Bartenev 2018).

Turkey

Russia has managed to get closer to Turkey, despite their opposition in Syria and its relations with Iran. As a guardian of the straits, Turkey is a pivotal state in the Mediterranean that has been able to take advantage of its position between the continents and seas where it is located. However, like many European countries, Turkey remains dependent on Russia in terms of energy. It is its main dependent partner, importing more than 55% of its natural gas from Russia and 35% of its coal (Prontera and Ruszel 2017).

Turkish energy routes are not only among the Russian geostrategic plans but also among some powerful actors in the Middle East region who want to make use of this transit space (Mocilnikar 2018). It should also be revealed that almost all its gas is imported, as Turkey is fully dependent on Russian gas (Prontera and Ruszel 2017). Thus, one can understand Turkey's desire for energy diversification, but also the Russians' determination to curb these plans. The seriousness of the Syrian conflict and the Russian/Iranian involvement have blocked potential projects for new energy routes to Europe. Turkey was interested in several pipeline projects proposed by various Arab-Persian countries and Israel, intending to pursue its energy diversification plan. If Turkey decides to go ahead with the project, the pipelines will have to cross through Syria's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), where Russia has control. Otherwise, it will have to pass through the EEZ of Cyprus, with which Moscow has good relations, unlike the one between Ankara. Also, an agreement has been formalized between Russia and Cyprus giving the Russians the right to use Cypriot port and airport facilities during their

intervention in Syria. The allies of the Syrian regime shall under no circumstances allow the execution of such a pipeline project, which could directly harm their market and power in the region.

However, a discussion has taken place between Tel Aviv-Nicosia-Athens on a pipeline project that could not only threaten Russia's planned European energy dependence on Russia but also totally exclude Turkey. The latter would lose its power as a transitional country and block its diversification project, while the Russian gas market would be threatened (Prontera and Ruszel 2017). Thus, Moscow and Ankara have a new common interest in blocking any project that excludes them. Despite the coldness of relations between Moscow and Ankara during a large part of the Syrian conflict, their relations were quickly rekindled. The resumption of the 'Turkish Stream' gas pipeline project in partnership with the Russian gas giant Gazprom, to connect Russia to Turkey. This created a distance between Turkey and the West, which Russia welcomed.

Erdogan is thus more provocative towards the West, which caused Westerners to be perplexed by his authoritarian habits. Russia has been able to use its presence in Syria to establish a strong influence in the Middle East region. It has also countered the Western influence present in the Middle East by moving closer to the only Eastern member: Turkey. Moreover, a recent agreement between Russia and Turkey provides for the construction of a nuclear power plant in Akkuyu, Turkey (Aşcı 2018). This Russian construction will make the plant operational by 2023 and will cost nearly $20 billion. This agreement could be the beginning of the advent of Russian-Turkish relations.

An agreement was recently reached between Turkey and Russia for the purchase of four S-400 anti-aircraft batteries. So far, two other countries have concluded this agreement with Russia, namely China and India. Several states are also considering making the same purchase, which rivals the US arms market and the power they have in some of these regions. This agreement amounts to nearly $2.5 billion and remains controversial because of Turkey's alliance with NATO (Taylor 2018). Indeed, NATO is concerned about this purchase, as there is nothing to prevent Turkey from buying arms from a country outside the organization.

Gulf Monarchies

Today, the energy plans of the Gulf monarchies are the most threatening for Russia. Only ten Middle Eastern countries hold nearly half of the world's oil reserves and more than 40% of its gas reserves. These include Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. Most of the latter are members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Also, the above-mentioned pipeline project from Qatar to Turkey to Europe should have passed through Syria. One of the theories of the impulsive involvement of Qatar and Saudi Arabia against Al-Assad comes from its rejection of this project on its territory. One can therefore understand

the importance of these petro-monarchies to get rid of this regime to be able to start their pipeline project. However, such a project poses a great threat to Russia, for which Europe is its largest importer of gas. Thus, Putin needed to have some control in Syria to be able to block not only Qatar's plans but also the sale of oil from Saudi Arabia (Aşcı 2018). Having reached an agreement with Iran on the one hand, Putin has developed his plan to reduce and even eliminate the threat from petro-monarchies. This would simultaneously reduce the influence of their American ally in the region. Moreover, Russia signed an agreement towards the end of 2016 with OPEC and Saudi Arabia to limit oil production, which would cause the price per barrel of oil to rise (Mocilnikar 2018). This was well received by its signatories since the agreement was renewed until the end of 2018 (Delanoë 2018) and recently renewed again until 2020. This strategic agreement has stabilized the oil market and its regulation according to market demand. It contributes as much to the stability as to the development of the sector. On the other hand, it has also helped to prevent price declines caused by the production of predominantly American hydrocarbons.

While Russia and the Gulf monarchies are competitors in the global oil and gas market, they are also rivaling at the political level. These Petro-monarchies have allied themselves with the United States over time, strengthening Western influence in the region. However, Russia has developed good relations with the petro-monarchies, despite its alliance with Iran, in addition to differences over the Syrian conflict. Putin has shown leadership by signing an agreement with OPEC to which his state is not a member and has been able to find common ground between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Even if Russia and some Middle Eastern states are rivals on various fronts (economic, political, ideological), Moscow retains credibility through diplomatic persuasion to reach an agreement with all the players in the region. Nevertheless, Russian relations with rival powers represent a risk for Moscow. If its relations with Iran are not maintained prudently, Russia risks first degrading its relations with the GCC. By doing so, it aims to affect the potential for investment in the Russian economy, provoke Sunni Islamist movements in Russia and finally undermine the diplomatic efforts Russia is working on to resolve the conflict in Syria. In this way, its activism and patience on energy, geopolitical and security issues in the Middle East have given it a foothold in the region's affairs with several rival states (Delanoë 2018).

For some years now, Putin has remained cautious in the face of tensions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia since the summer of 2017, which led to Qatar's decision to leave OPEC in 2019. Faced with this situation, Moscow has remained neutral to protect its national interests and has not refrained from working on agreements with each of them. Indeed, Russia has recently discussed more than fifteen agreements with Saudi Arabia, including the construction of a nuclear power plant in Saudi Arabia and a package of arms sales. Aside from the many military and technical cooperation agreements signed between Russia and Qatar, the latter also seems interested in procuring the famous S-

400s, which caused the Saudi protest (Kabalan 2018). On the other hand, Qatar recently invested in the Russian economy with the purchase of shares in the Russian oil company Rosneft, in the amount of 11.3 billion dollars (Karasik 2017). In short, the diminishing American involvement in the region, the inconsistency and unpredictability of the Trump administration, and the Russian victory in Syria have motivated the petro-monarchies to turn to Russia. This has thus presented Russia as a major player in the security of the region.

CONCLUSION

Because of the various points raised in this paper, several observations emerge. First of all, the Russian military intervention in Syria since 2015 was not part of the application of the grand Middle East or even global strategy but of a pragmatic search for the projection of energy and economic interests, and an attempt to resolve the closest concerns in the region, which are the primary concern of its foreign policy. This paper tried to highlight the geo-economic rationale for the Russian intervention in Syria. It aimed to dissect several causes of the Russian strategy in the Syrian conflict. The analysis allowed us to investigate how Russia managed to regain the powerful position it had at the time of the USSR on the international scene. Putin was able to take advantage of every international event to accumulate geopolitical and geo-economic gains in the Middle East. His alliance with the Syrian regime, as well as his preponderant participation in the military support to Al-Assad in the civil war, enabled him to become a powerful player in the stakes of the region. Any issue or decision related to Syria now goes through Moscow. His fight in Syria has enabled him to weaken extremist groups in Syria to prevent the spread of extremist ideology on his territory or in those of his former Soviet republics. This has thus earned him military zones and shares in the hydrocarbon sector offered by the Syrian regime. This 'war on terror' initiative has been instrumentalized by Russia as an instrument to help it break out of the diplomatic isolation it has suffered for several years in the West (Notte 2016). Syria's geostrategy was crucial for Russia's future hydrocarbon route projects. It was also important for blocking the pipelines of other countries that were likely to compete with its policies aimed at maintaining Europe's energy dependence on its hydrocarbons. Moscow also used its intervention in Syria to draw closer to several Middle Eastern regional powers. Despite the coldness of Russian-Turkish relations during the Syrian conflict, Moscow managed to renew its relations with Ankara. This led to the conclusion of important agreements on armaments, conventional energy, and nuclear technology. Moreover, it used the same tactics with powerful petro-monarchies, notably Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Despite their alliance with Washington, Russia has managed to demonstrate its power with these countries and to reduce American influence. In this way, several agreements were created and linked to the hydrocarbon sector, the most important being the

Turkish Stream with Turkey. The vision emanating from the Kremlin also secured gains for its arms deal with Turkey. Finally, its intervention in Syria offered new development opportunities, thanks to the cooperation of its Iranian and Turkish allies. Finally, Russia's alliance with these regional powers enabled it to win the war in Syria and strengthen its position in the Middle East. Also, Russia's strategy has highlighted how energy issues and the geo-economy are now setting the pace for political decisions. We have seen that Putin has taken advantage of the differences and issues at stake between certain groups of states in the region to pursue his agenda of energy dependence.

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DIVERGENCES FROM THE SEPARATION OF POWERS IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS TO THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract: *The worldwide pandemic caused by the coronavirus has disturbed the pure conception of the separation of powers. States forced by the newly established situation, declared a state of emergency, thus the Republic of North Macedonia was not an exception. This paper will focus on the divergences from the separation of powers in the countries from the Western Balkans and across Europe whose departure in the well-established system of checks and balances intrigued the media. The case of North Macedonia was maybe the most interesting because in time of declaring the state of emergency by the President of the Republic, the legislative branch of power – the Assembly was dissolute which meant that the already difficult situation became more complicated to establish a balance between the branches of power to function in protecting the general health of the citizens and the fundamental human rights and freedoms.*

Keywords: *Separation of Powers; Pandemic; COVID-19; State of Emergency; Human Rights*

INTRODUCTION

In times of emergency when the life of the nation is threatened by the coronavirus, several segments are in a position to be jeopardized such as the public health, functional democracy, rule of law, the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, and the possibility of introducing regimes which not only disturb the balance between the branches of power but also can cause irreversible damages. This requires posing a borderline between the needs of the citizens and the presumption of preventing possible autocracy.

In the past years, states of emergency have been declared in several states across Europe such as France (2015), Belgium (2015), and Turkey (2016) due to different reasons which involve terrorist violence, coup attempts, and domestic disturbances. The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 not only changed the perception of everyday life but also made divergences in the separation of powers, limitation to fundamental human rights and freedoms, and serious health crisis which affected all segments of power. In the Republic of North Macedonia, the state of emergency was declared in March 2020 in the specific circumstance of a dissolved Assembly which could not act as a controller of the Government's performance in extraordinary conditions.

This paper will focus on the legal aspects of declared states of emergency, divergences from the well-established separation of powers, and gaps in the Constitution that may cause different interpretations of constitutional provisions. The subject of analysis will be the relations between the Government as the organ that can deliver decrees with a force of law and the 'substitutive' control mechanisms located in the President of the Republic and the Constitutional Court. Finally, the paper will argue the lessons learned from this pandemic and the need for intervention in the Constitution, adoption of a Law on the state of emergency, and the dilemma of what will happen if the decisions for declaring a state of emergency are not approved by the Assembly.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SEPARATION OF POWERS: FROM MONTESQUIEU TILL CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Democracy has many shapes, but it is usually predicated upon an effective separation of powers between the legislature, executive, and judiciary. In such terms, democracy may be related to functional institutions and the rule of law as we are familiar with nowadays. The doctrine of separation of powers between independent and co-equal branches of government is derived from the work of the French politician and social philosopher Baron de Montesquieu. In his 'The Spirit of the Laws' (Evans and Davies 1748) he defined the principle of separation of powers. Therefore, Montesquieu stated that: "in every government, there are three sorts of power: the legislative, the

executive in respect to things dependent on the law of nations and the executive regarding matters that depend on the civil law (…)" (Evans and Davies 1748, 198-199). The separation of powers refers to the division of government responsibilities into distinct branches. Montesquieu asserted that these three branches of powers must be divided into a person and in function and they must act independently (Omejec 2015). Thus, this tripartite system is based on mutual checks and balances. The phrase check and balance implies that there are competing sovereigns. Checks refer to the ability, right, and responsibility of each power to monitor the activities of the other, while 'balance' refers to the ability of each entity to use its authority to limit the power of the other (Tasneem 2012). Broadly speaking, the legislature writes and adopts the laws, the executive enforces the laws, and finally, the judiciary delivers judgments about what laws mean and determines any violations. Precisely, this system of checks and balances ensures that the power is not vested in any single individual or organ and secures balance between institutions and at the same time enhances efficiency in exercising laws and protection of fundamental rights. In this way, there is clear supervision between the branches, because in practice abuses and excess mostly lie with the executive and its influence on the other two branches of powers.

In contemporary democracies, the doctrine of separation of powers is enshrined in the constitutions and even in some of them listed as the fundamental values of the state. That is the example with the countries from the Western Balkan, while in the rest of Europe; it depends on the constitutional order of the state and system of governance (parliamentary, presidential state, etc.).

In the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, the separation of powers is considered as one among the fundamental values, where it is prescribed that the separation of state powers into legislative, executive, and judiciary is considered as a fundamental value of the constitutional order and the rights and obligations between these branches of power are listed in details in the Constitution (Constitution of North Macedonia 1991).

DIVISION OF POWERS AMONG EUROPE IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY

The dramatic spread of the COVID-19 which was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 30 January 2020 has confronted states with unprecedented institutional challenges and has obliged institutions and governments to adopt strict measures effective citizens' rights. These reactions were followed with serious divergences in the separation of powers to declare a state of emergency and to uphold necessary measures. While some Member States' constitutions include a mechanism allowing for recourse to a state of emergency or the entrustment of special powers to specific institutions, other Member States' legal order does not, either for historic or owing to institutional tradition. Crucial aspects of the exercise of public

powers under a pandemic threat include not only the extent of the measures adopted but also their legitimacy, raising the question of their duration and the degree of parliamentary oversight (EP Briefing 2020). The regulation of the state of emergency depends greatly on the constitutional order of the state concerned. Some states of emergency are regulated in constitutions and/or in-laws of special nature with different names such as 'state of war', 'state of siege' or 'martial law' and mostly, they address extraordinary situations which arise upon specific conditions, such as war, health or epidemic emergencies. Due to coronavirus, a state of emergency was declared in 10 Member States of EU (Italy, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania, Finland, Luxembourg, and Portugal). Six more Member States have declared similar regimes: Hungary declared a 'state of danger', Croatia issued a 'declaration of epidemic disease', Estonia declared an 'emergency', Spain a 'state of alarm', France a 'state of sanitary emergency', Poland a 'state of epidemic threat' (EP and LIBE Committee 2020). The other Member States used normal legislation or decrees to adopt appropriate restrictive measures.

If we observe the regulation of the state of emergency in some of the EU Member States, we can notice the different application of norms in distinct terms and laws. For example, the Belgian Constitution has no specific provisions dedicated to the state of emergency *in stricto sensu*. On the contrary, the Constitution, in Article 187 clearly states that the Constitution cannot be suspended, but there is a mechanism named 'special powers' which may be triggered by the Belgian Parliament to delegate legislative powers to the government (The Constitution of Belgium 1831). The French Constitution does not recognize the term 'state of emergency' and instead refers to the state of siege proclaimed by the Council of Ministers and a lasting maximum of 12 days unless prolonged by the Parliament with a strict specification to the territory to which it applies (The Constitution of France, Article 36). In Germany, the provisions about the state of emergency were added in the Basic Law in 1968 to allow the Federal Government to react in crises. Ever since, the Basic Law has distinguished between internal and external states of emergency, The first covers situations when the country finds itself under military attack or facing an imminent threat, while the latter covers two specific regimes, the 'state of tension' governed by Basic Law and the 'state of defense' set out in Basic Law (Basic Law of Germany 1949). The Italian Constitution does not set out rules for a state of emergency or the transfer of power between the three branches, however, the Constitution provides for the declaration of a state of war with attribution of the necessary powers to the government (Constitution of Italy 1948).

Activated emergency powers are triggering implications in the well-established separation of powers by concentrating the whole power in the executive (government), while the legislature and judiciary are suspended by their powers. This situation also causes limitations in the fundamental human rights and freedoms by posing restrictions in the right of free movement, exercising the right to asylum, freedom of assembly,

freedom of expression, etc. The main fears when declaring a state of emergency lie in the fact that the given authorities can be abused concentrated in one branch of power and used to create regimes opposite the need to deal with the pandemic and health crisis. Hungary and Poland are the best examples of these attempts to use the health crisis to establish autocracy.

In Hungary, the Government delivered a decision to prolong the state of emergency indefinitely, to authorize the Government to rule by decree without time limit and to weaken the emergency oversight of the Parliament. The emergency law is known as the 'authorization act' passed by the Hungarian Parliament on 30 March 2020 without specifying the term limit. The state of emergency was used to limit certain human rights, such as spreading fake news was considered as a jailable offense and the local government revenues have been redirected to the central government (Bozoki 2020). While, the Polish Government changed the electoral code against the judgment of the Constitutional tribunal and provisions laid by law and hold Presidential elections in the middle of a pandemic, which endangered the lives of Polish citizens and undermined the concept of equal, free, direct, and secret elections as enshrined in the Polish Constitution (EP Resolution 2020/2616(RSP)).

STATE OF EMERGENCY VIS-À-VIS SEPARATION OF POWERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The Republic of North Macedonia has imposed one of the strictest mobility restrictions on citizens in Europe to prevent the Italian scenario where thousands of people died as a result of coronavirus and the cities and whole regions were put in lock-down. The state of emergency in the Republic of North Macedonia is regulated in the Constitution i.e. in the Seventh chapter. Article 125 regulates that:

> A state of emergency exists when major natural disasters or epidemics take place. A state of emergency on the territory of the Republic or part thereof is determined by the Assembly upon a proposal by the President of the Republic, the Government, or by at least 30 representatives. The decision to establish the existence of a state of emergency is made by a two-thirds majority vote of the total number of representatives and can remain in force for a maximum of 30 days (Constitution 1991).

Hence, in absence of a separate law on the state of emergency, the Constitution in Article 125 determines the conditions which need to be fulfilled to establish a state of emergency and the duration of it. Following these provisions, on 18 March 2020, the Government asked the Assembly to declare a state of emergency. However, the Assembly was dissolved on 16 February 2020 due to the scheduled pre-term elections which were supposed to be held on 12 April 2020.

Due to this unexpected circumstance, paragraph 3 from Article 125 was activated, where it prescribes that "if Assembly cannot meet the decision to establish the existence of a state of emergency is made by the President of the Republic who submits it to the Assembly for confirmation as soon as possible".

Establishing the state of emergency by the President of the Republic meant that the whole power will be concentrated in one branch - the executive in a situation of a dissolved Assembly that cannot exercise its control function over the Government's performance. Thus, Article 126 from the Constitution was triggered where the legislator prescribed that: "during a state of emergency, the Government following the Constitution and law, issues decrees with the force of law. The authorization of the Government to issue decrees with the force of law lasts until the termination of the state of emergency, on which the Assembly decides". In this specific circumstance when the Parliament is not in session, the only control mechanism that can prevent the Government in order not to cross its authorizations in delivering decrees with a force of law is the Constitutional Court.

In the most critical period when the country fought with the coronavirus, the President of the Republic issued three decisions for establishing a state of emergency. The first and second decisions were adopted to protect and deal with the consequences of the spreading of COVID-19, while the third referred to giving the possibility to the Government to adopt economic measures assisting those who suffered economically as a consequence of the epidemic.

The decisions for declaring a state of emergency were subjected to review by the Constitutional Court. The initiative for the first state of emergency was rejected because the declaration was not in force anymore (Decision U.No.41/2020). The second decision for declaration of a state of emergency was also subject to review by the Constitutional Court where the Court rejected and decided that the prolongation of a state of emergency for additional 30 days is constitutional. The Constitutional Court stated in particular that "if conditions for a state of emergency are still valid, which is a constitutional ground and a basic condition, a new decision for the state of emergency should be adopted" (Resolution U.no.55/20). All preconditions were fulfilled: there was a new evaluation of the current situation, where it was established that there is a need for declaring a new state of emergency for additional 30 days.

It is important to emphasize that the coronavirus did not cause disturbances only in the separation of powers and the way how the country was ruled in a time of emergency, but also has repercussions on the fundamental human rights and freedoms. In April 2020, North Macedonia made a derogation under Article 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights from Article 8 (the right to respect for private and family life), Article 11 (freedom to assembly and association), as well as from Article 2 of the Protocol No. 1 (the right to education) and Article 2 of the Protocol No. 4 (the freedom of movement). *Note verbale* informing the Council of Europe for derogations from the

Convention's rights was submitted on 2 April 2020. Similarly, as declared states of emergency, limitations to human rights were posted before the Constitutional Court. In the first decision, the Court concluded that the Constitution allowed restricting certain human rights only in a limited number of cases determined by the Constitution which allowed limitations on the right to movement, right to strike, and right to peaceful assembly (Constitution 1991, Articles 21, 27 and 38). In Resolution 42/2020, the Constitutional Court emphasized that certain human rights including those that consider inviolable cannot be subjected to restrictions such as the right to life, prohibition to torture, determination of punishable offenses and sentences as well as to the freedom of personal conviction, conscience, thought and religious confession. However, the most affected right with the declaration of the state of emergency was the right of movement which was restricted both internally and cross-border. The most affected by the limitations in the freedom of movement were the minors under the age of 18 and the persons above the age of 67 which were left a couple of hours to move freely. This decision was challenged before the Constitutional Court, which issued a temporary measure suspending its implementation as potentially discriminatory based on age (Decision U.No.60/2020). Several decrees with a force of law delivered by the Government in times of emergency were questioned before the Constitutional Court:

- The Decree with a force of law for determining the limit of the salary of elected and appointed officials in the public sector for the time of emergency was nullified (Decision U.No.44/2020);
- The Decree with a force of law on limitation of payment of public sector employee's' benefits and compensation for the period of the emergency was nullified because the Constitutional Court determined that the limitation of the labor rights does not has a constitutional basis (Decision U.No.49/2020);
- The Decree with a force of law for public prosecutors' servants, investigators, and other employees in the Special Prosecution Office (SPO) was also nullified (Decision U.No.45/2020); and
- The Decree with the legal force for terms of judicial proceedings in a state of emergency and work of courts and public prosecutors were nullified (Decision U.No.56/2020).

Hence, extraordinary conditions caused by the coronavirus and the state of emergency have disturbed not only the well-established separation of powers but also affect the normal exercise of fundamental human rights and freedoms. The Macedonian case was maybe the most extraordinary due to the dissolved Assembly, technical Government established for organizing the parliamentary elections, and the states of emergency declared by the President of the Republic which activated the specific constitutional provisions giving the Government right to deliver decrees with a force of law. However, this right is not absolute, which points to the fact that the decrees with a

force of the law should be subjected to strict criteria for their necessity and proportionality (Kambovski *et. al* 2020). This connotation implies that the parliamentary democracy should not be suspended in times of emergency, checks and balances must exist although their location now should be traced to the President of the Republic when declaring a state of emergency and the Constitutional Court when decides upon submitted initiatives about the constitutionality and legality of the decrees with a force of laws and their accordance with Constitution. This control is necessary to avoid the creation of regimes and delivering decisions that are not related to the state of emergency.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: WHAT AFTER THE STATES OF EMERGENCY?

The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 has shown the weaknesses of the Macedonian legal system in terms of existing legal gaps, firstly in the Constitution. As elaborated previously in this paper, there is no doubt that we need a Law on the state of emergency upon Article 124 and 125 from the Constitution, where all segments of the state of emergency will be covered especially putting the focus on the functioning of the Government in extraordinary conditions and defining the procedure for delivering decrees with a force of law, the control and the liability in case of abuses. Moreover, the decrees with a force of law must be delivered only for matters with fall under the terms of the state of emergency and dealing with the pandemic. This means that other issues that are not related to the pandemic cannot be considered as part of the state of emergency. This requires that the principle of proportionality must be taken into consideration. The measures undertaken in the state of emergency must be proportionate to the danger and the threat upon the nation concerned. One specific concern is the lack of determination of the duration of the decrees with a force of law delivered by the Government in a state of emergency. The question concerns if the legal force ends automatically with the repealing of the state of emergency or some legal conditions and relations can be continued after the state of emergency? What is intriguing about this situation is that even the Constitutional Court did not answer this question. This is just one example of what can be included in the Law on the state of emergency. The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia has been in session for more than three months after the parliamentary elections and still, the decisions for declaring a state of emergency have not been confirmed. It is not clear why we need the Assembly to confirm the decisions for states of emergency several months after their declaration. What will happen if the Assembly decides not to confirm these decisions and what political repercussions can we face? *Restitutio in integrum* cannot apply for these specific circumstances and it is more than evident that we need to specify certain provisions in the Constitution, moreover because this was the first time when the state of emergency has been declared from the country's independence.

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VIETNAM AND INDIA'S APPROACH TO THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION: IMPLICATION FOR BILATERAL RELATION PROMOTION

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Abstract: *There have been tectonic shifts in the Indo-Pacific region, impacting relations among international actors, including traditionally close partners like Vietnam and India. By using the approach of realism and constructivism in international relations, this paper discusses Vietnam and India's approach to the Indo-Pacific region to expand their substantive strategic relationship. The paper finds out that geopolitical changes in the Indo-Pacific directly influence the bilateral relation and create challenges as well as opportunities. By using the SWOT model, the paper analyzes driving factors and challenges to the Vietnam- India relations. Through the findings, it suggests both countries need to take advantages of the regional cooperation to further Vietnam-India's strategic comprehensive partnership.*

Keywords: *Vietnam; India; Indo-Pacific; International Cooperation; SWOT Model*

INTRODUCTION

Vietnam and India's approach to the Indo-Pacific region involves increasing economic, geopolitical, and security connections between the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean regions as well as perspectives from Vietnam and India on regional and international issues. This approach has become increasingly vital not only for Vietnam and India to maintain their economic, security interest at global as well as regional and national level but also to cope with a rising China.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Both realism and constructivism concern the nongovernment factors of international relations. According to Thomas Hobbes, realism considers countries focus on their national interests, act for their gains. In the current regional situation, China has been acting to expand its influences and using aggressive methods in the East Sea (which China claimed the South China Sea) through strengthening marine modernization and military (Noguchi 2011). The emergence of China in the sea has brought regional countries to improve their marine activities and find a balance factor, leading to the forming of Indo-Pacific cooperation, with the involvement of the United States and India. In the context of forming the 'Indo-Pacific' area, involved countries like Vietnam, India, Australia, the US have their interest to engage in the cooperation, which is opportunities of economics and marine security.

Constructivism defines international relations based on shared ideas, rather than material forces, which fits the Vietnam-Indian relation in the context of Indo-Pacific. Under constructivism, countries' social identity is a factor influencing the country's decision of cooperation in the international environment. The national characteristics influence national interest and strategies (Behravesh 2011). From this point of view, countries with similar characteristics such as historical relations, regional interest like Vietnam and India have many advantages and driving force to develop their relationship. Based on international rules and norms, actors develop their relation, each actor or country has its own set of norms and rules in the international environment, which form their own identity that other actors can react accordingly. The emergence of the Indo-Pacific area is an ongoing process, encouraging regional countries, such as Vietnam, India, and Australia to look for a cooperative mechanism to engage regional maritime activities. This condition also becomes the bridge to push bilateral relations between Vietnam and India. The 'Indo-Pacific' stretches from the marine and mainland region between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, the term- was mentioned by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his speech at the Indian Parliament (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2007), and was used many times by the President of the United States, Mr. Donald Trump to replace the term 'Asia-Pacific'.

Among Australian scholars, the term 'Indo-Pacific' appeared back in the 1950s (Tyler and Shearman 2013). As a country is located between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, Australia has gradually increased its interest in Indo-Pacific, especially due to different factors, "India's rise, the increasing importance of Southeast Asia, a greater interest in energy flows, and the growing maritime presence of new external players" (Lion 2016, 9-23). Australia Defense White Paper (2016, 37-47) mentioned this region as a "stable wider region, which we now conceptualize as the emerging Indo-Pacific". The Australians view this reason as "connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans through Southeast Asia" (Australia Defense White Paper 2016, 37-47), in which the focus is the Southeast Asian sea and important roles of ASEAN countries. In this region, multilateral cooperation between ASEAN and South Asian countries is also needed. From Australia's point of view, this term provides an economic and security opportunity for involved countries, including Australia, "The growing prosperity of the Indo-Pacific and the rules-based global order on which Australia relies for open access to our trading partners are based on the maintenance of peace and stability" (Australia Defense White Paper 2016, 37-47) and it is influenced by the US-China relation.

With the new presidency of Mr. Donald Trump, the United States has promoted much tougher foreign policies, which aim to bring the nation to a leading position in the economy and ensure its security. The term 'Indo-Pacific' which is used to replace 'Asia-Pacific' is considered to put India in its focus. Under the term, the Indo-US relation is to create marine cooperation to promote a trading corridor, strengthen bilateral relations. The United States intends to involve India in the QUAD group, consisting of the US, Japan, Australia, and India to deal with the rise of China. It can be said that the Indo-Pacific plays a crucial role in the foreign policy of the Trump administration and "critical for America's continued stability, security, and prosperity" (Dod 2018, 2-5). Hence, the US and India need to coordinate on different issues. The US intends to use this strategy to realize its 'American first' policy and India can become a balancing factor to rising China in the Indian and Pacific Ocean. In the Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore (June 2018), the Indo-Pacific appeared as the most interesting topic. In the speech of Singaporean PM, Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, he mentioned the role of ASEAN in Indo-Pacific, and the principles "ASEAN Centrality, openness, transparency, inclusivity, and a rules-based approach, to enhance mutual trust, respect and benefit" (ASEAN 2018).

In recent years, there are changes in the Indo-Pacific Ocean region. The rise of China encourages various countries like India, Japan, and Australia to promote the idea of regional cooperation. Unilateral decisions by China to expand air zones, the militarization of the sea, and building new artificial islands create issues relating to the South China Sea. The Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf has attracted attention in many countries. There is increasing concern about the debt trap of China. In the Indian Ocean, China has been expanding its marine strategy includes seaports in countries where they got long-term leases. It is difficult to say if they are used for

commercial purposes or other forms. Regional cooperation promotes security and creates economic opportunities and ensures countries' national interests. The statement from the Chinese government does not specifically demonstrate any response to the Indo-Pacific initiative, arguing that the Indian-Pacific regional cooperation should go according to the commitments made by the countries, is not aimed at a country. On the occasion of the opening of the first session of the 13th National Assembly on 08 March 2018, Mr. Wang Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, shows China's confidence in cooperation in the One Belt and One Road Initiative and not worried about the Indian-Pacific initiative. He said that this does not affect the relationship of both countries, the development orientation of the two countries is different, one side is the Dragon, the other is the Elephant, and both need cooperation instead of competition (Yi 2018). He implied that the two sides should support each other, such as India's need to support China in its Belt and Road Initiative.

India and some other countries share a similar viewpoint, that 'Indo-Pacific' is an open term, which means the Indo-Pacific region welcome cooperation among countries, and is not against any players. India also stays in Russia's 'Indo-Pacific' strategy as Russia is searching for stability in West Asia, a part of the Indo-Pacific geographical domain in India's viewpoint. However, according to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, in a meeting of the Dialogue of Young Diplomats from the Asia-Pacific Region on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF), Vladivostok, 12 September 2018 (MID 2018), the challenge is that there has not been a clear principle system for India and other countries to cooperate in this region.

Most of the countries support the 'Indo-Pacific' concept and others require clearer definition and cooperation principles in this matter. All official statements regard the 'Indo-Pacific' region for economic and security cooperation. However, many scholars share the view that it is to challenge the rise of China. David Scott (2012) opines that this term shows the competition between the US and China, and the US engages India in its plans in the Indian Ocean (Scott 2012, 85-109). However, it is impossible to exclude China from the region, as its increasing marine appearance and operations.

Under the term 'Indo-Pacific', the initiative of the QUAD has been raised as a cooperation group of 4 countries including India, Japan, Australia, and the US. Many argue this is an old term in the changing environment. According to Kuni Miyake, President of the Foreign Policy Institute and Research Director at Canon Institute for Global Studies, the concept of 'Indo-Pacific' should be considered "Middle East-Asia" and it is hard for Japan to secure its interest in this area, "the concept may not be geographically sufficient to guarantee Japan's survival" (Mofa 2014, 1-5). Humphrey Hawksley, author of 'Asian Waters: The Struggle Over the South China Sea and the Strategy of Chinese Expansion', also shared the opinion that the Indo-Pacific initiative is an out of date idea with India as a weak link, in the context of China's rise in the last 20 years "while China has single-mindedly committed to military expansion, India has

muddled along and, as with its overall development, has been left behind (Hawksley 2018, 11). According to officials' statements and documents from the government and scholars of Vietnam and India, both countries support cooperation for the national interest based on strong existing relations. It is also the same views shared by other countries including Japan, Australia, and the United States.

Vietnamese scholars' views on Vietnam-India cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region are optimistic. Vietnam and India "share the strategic cooperation relationship, and have an important position of the two oceans: the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean" (Thang 2018), hence, "Vietnam and India share pillars to sustain and uphold the aspiration of a "free and open Indo-Pacific region, which are essential for the realization of the goal of the Asian century" (Ganguly 2018, 18-31). Currently, although Vietnam and India have similar opportunities and challenges, both countries can overcome these challenges through bilateral cooperation for mutual benefits (Le 2018).

METHODOLOGY

The main methodology contains realism and constructivism approach to analyze the change in India, and Vietnam-Indian relations in the changing international context, from the view of the interaction between geostrategic and geopolitical interests among major countries. Indo-Vietnam relations have a long historical process - hence, the article also applies historical research methods. The frame of the paper uses the SWOT analysis model to find out the challenges strength and weakness of Vietnam-India bilateral relations in the Indo-Pacific region. The analysis and evaluation of the Vietnam-India relation in the Indo-Pacific context are based on official policies, national development strategies provided by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), official diplomatic statements, and the Vietnam government, Indian government, along with Western as well as Indian research materials.

VIETNAM AND INDIA'S APPROACH TO THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

From Vietnam's point of view, cooperation is encouraged in terms of national security and defense, in the Indo-Pacific. Vietnam considered its geopolitical advantage through the East Sea, as a bridge connecting Southeast Asia with the rest of Asia, and on various marine time routes. President Tran Dai Quang mentioned the term 'Indo-Asian-Pacific' in a speech on bilateral relations at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library on 04 March 2018, to describe

> a security and development space including the Indian Ocean, Asia, and the Pacific. He also suggested that the XXI century would be "the Indo-Asian-Pacific Century', and regional countries must: (1) share a common vision of an open and rule-based area, and a common interest in

maintaining peace, stability, and prosperity; (2) protect unrestricted maritime and commercial freedom and not allow the Indo-Asian-Pacific to be divided into areas of influence; (3) build a common space for coexistence and development in the belief that the Indo-Asian-Pacific is large enough for every nation to grow and prosper; and (4) establish effective mechanisms to maintain peace, stability, and rule of law, to ensure joint security, prevent conflict and war, and solve security challenges effectively (Le 2018, 1-7).

In the context of world politics undergoing tectonic changes, India is recognized as the nucleus of the Indo-Pacific regional security architecture along with the US, Japan, and Australia. From an Indian perspective, the 'Indo-Pacific' region refers to the maritime space stretching from the littorals of East Africa and West Asia, across the Indian Ocean and western Pacific Ocean, to the littorals of East Asia (Goshal 2018, 345). Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the Indian Ocean region as a compact that is "from of the shores Africa to that of the Americas" (MEA 2018).

India's approach to the Indo-Pacific region has a time-adjustment, consistent with national, regional, and global issues. This is reflected in the statement of some politicians, researchers, and official statements of India. In 1941, Indian politician, Kalidas Nag, used the term 'Indo-Pacific domain' to affirm India's longstanding civilization in the region. Dr. Gurpreet S. Khurana, Executive Director of the National Maritime Foundation in New Delhi, India and a Captain in the Indian Navy who is credited for being one of the first to use the term 'Indo-Pacific' in the context of strategic and geopolitical discourse in India describes at the "The Trans-Pacific View Insight Series and *Explain the essence of "Indo-Pacific" as a geopolitical framework* (Kuo 2018).

Jawaharlal Nehru, in his book 'The Discovery of India' (1945), observed that:

> The Pacific is likely to take the place of the Atlantic in the future as a nerve center of the world. Though not directly a Pacific state, India will inevitably exercise an important influence there. India will also develop as the center of economic and political activity in the Indian Ocean area, in south-east Asia, and right up to the Middle East. Her position gives her economic and strategic importance, which is believed to develop rapidly in the future (IDSA 2018).

Most recently, India's approach to the Indo-Pacific region is evident in the documents elaborated further in the text. According to the Foreword of the 'Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy', the shift in worldview from a Euro-Atlantic to an Indo-Pacific focus and "the repositioning of global economic and military power towards Asia has resulted in significant political, economic and social changes in the Indian Ocean Region and impacted India's maritime environment in tangible ways"

(Defence 2017)*,* region is considered the most important factor leading to a change in India's maritime strategic thinking in 2015.

In the 'India Japan Vision 2025 - Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World' (2015), the 'Indo-Pacific' concept was mentioned 6 times. It affirmed "Recognizing that peace, stability, and development in the Indo-Pacific region is indispensable to their national security and prosperity, they reaffirmed that close cooperation between Japan and India is the key to achieve peace and stability in the region" and share the "Vision for Peace and Stability" in Indo –Pacific (MEA 2015).

In the 'India-Australia Joint Statement' during the State visit of Prime Minister of Australia to India between 9-12 April 2017,

> two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific, based on mutual respect and cooperation" and "share a commitment to democratic values, rule of law, international peace and security, and shared prosperity. The strategic and economic interests of both countries are converging which opens up opportunities for working together in a rapidly changing region (MEA 2017)*.*

In the 'United States and India Joint Statement: Prosperity through Partnership' (26 June 2017), as responsible powers in the Indo-Pacific region, President Trump and Prime Minister Modi agreed that

> a close partnership between the United States and India is central to peace and stability in the region" and the leaders reiterated the importance of respecting freedom of navigation, overflight, and commerce throughout the region; call upon all nations to resolve territorial and maritime disputes peacefully and by international law; support bolstering regional economic connectivity through the transparent development of infrastructure and the use of responsible debt financing practices, while ensuring respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the rule of law, and the environment; and call on other nations in the region to adhere to these principles (Whitehouse 2017).

Also, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a statement at the ASEAN Summit (Philippines 2017) affirming that "India's Act East Policy is shaped around the ASEAN, and its centrality in the regional security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region is evident" and "India assures the ASEAN of its steady support towards achieving a rules-based regional security architecture that best attests to the region's interests and its peaceful development" (India 2017).

Further, the Indian Prime Minister at the Plenary Session of the India - ASEAN Commemorative Summit (25 January 2018), remarked that the ASEAN-India cooperation

in maritime domains one of the key focus areas for growth and development of the Indo-Pacific region (Pib 2018). During the official visit of the Prime Minister of India to the Republic of Indonesia on 29-30 May 2018, the President of Indonesia, Mr. Joko Widodo, and Narendra Modi discussed the shared vision of the two countries on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and reiterated the importance of achieving a free, open, transparent, rules-based, peaceful, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, where sovereignty and territorial integrity, international law, in particular UNCLOS, freedom of navigation and overflight, sustainable development and an open, free, fair and mutually beneficial trade and investment system are respected; Acknowledging the need to maintain maritime safety and security for peace, stability and sustainable economic growth and development in the Indo-Pacific marine region as enshrined in UNCLOS and relevant international laws (Pib2018).

The 'Indo-Pacific' region lies at the heart of India's foreign and security policy as stated by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his keynote address at the IISS Shangri-La dialogue (01 June 2018). And this term was used more than ten times in his speech. He observed that

> The Indo-Pacific is a natural region. It is also home to a vast array of global opportunities and challenges (…) the ten countries of South East Asia connect two great oceans in both geographical and civilizational sense. Inclusiveness, openness, and ASEAN centrality and unity, therefore, lie at the heart of the new Indo-Pacific. India does not see the Indo-Pacific Region as a strategy or as a club of limited members. Nor as a grouping that seeks to dominate. And by no means do we consider it as directed against any country. India's vision for the Indo-Pacific Region is, therefore, a positive one. And, it has many elements (MEA 2018).

In summary, India supports and promotes a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA-VIETNAM RELATION PROMOTION

Strength

Vietnam-India relations have been developing stably based on their long-standing relationship as President Ho Chi Minh once described as "a cloudless sky" (Thang 2017, 7-12). Nowadays, "the sky is not only blue but also shines" (Thang 2017, 7-12). This is the strong foundation for the development of a friendly relationship in an area with many complicated developments in the Indo-Pacific region. Currently, both India and Vietnam are increasingly asserting their position in the international market.

While India is growing strongly, Vietnam is also rising to affirm its voice. This has contributed to strengthening the historical and civilization linkage, the common economic and strategic interests to create a new synergy in Vietnam - India relations.

According to former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee: "History and geography have set us (India and Vietnam) as strategic partners" (Thang 2017, 7-12). With India becoming the nucleus of the Indo-Pacific regional security architecture, India's position on geostrategic maps is increasingly being raised, at the same time, the cooperation between India and the subjects of this security structure will be strengthened, including Vietnam. President Tran Dai Quang and Prime Minister Modi in the Joint Statement signed during President Quang's visit to India "reiterated the importance of achieving a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region where sovereignty and international law, freedom of navigation and overflight, sustainable development and a free, fair and open trade and investment system are respected" (Pib 2018).

Besides, while India implements a multi-faced diplomacy strategy, Vietnam also pursues multilateral diplomacy, to promote a peaceful, cooperative, and joint development in the region. It proves that through passing difficulties and challenges together, Vietnam-India's bilateral relations are strengthened. Specifically, in the context of regional development, the connection in the Indo- Pacific region would bring mutual benefits to Vietnam and India, as the Indo-Pacific region is home to three of the world's largest economies (US, China, and Japan), 7 out of 8 fastest-growing economies and 7 out of 10 largest army forces in the world. This arterial and economically vibrant region will create driving factors for the growth of developing countries like Vietnam and India.

Weakness

Vietnam and India are geographical far from each other, with poor transport infrastructure connection, especially by sea. Besides, differences in culture, customs, and languages also affect the connection and the in-depth development in their bilateral relationship. In particular, Vietnam and India have differences in political institutions, national development strategies. While Vietnam pursues the one-party system with the Communist Party as the leading nucleus, India has a pluralist and opposition political system, in which political decisions, including foreign policíes, are often formed through the intricate, complex struggle of diverse parties and interest groups. Currently, the difference in international position between Vietnam and India also makes the two countries have flexible in balancing relations with other countries to ensure the stability of bilateral relations and the development of multilateral relations. Also, one of the other weaknesses in Vietnam-India relations is the Chinese factor. China's rise, and its coercive behavior and aggressive stance have created tensions among Southeast Asian countries. The current Indo-Pacific region attracts attention from both China and the US

which can be seen through the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy of the US and China's BRI initiative, which creates tensions and confrontation risk in the region, hence, promoting arms races among regional countries, threatens the Vietnam-India bilateral relations.

Opportunities

Cooperation opportunities between Vietnam and India in the current Indo – Pacific regional context are shown in the following aspects:

Firstly, at the global system level, Vietnam-India relations in the context of the 'Indo-Pacific: Free and Open' has benefited from the following factors: an open global investment environment promoted by great powers, a global trend in peace and cooperation, the fourth industrial revolution. And having received greater attention from great and major countries such as the US, Japan, Australia, India, and ASEAN countries, the Indo-Pacific region will have stronger, dynamic economic development and will provide more opportunities for economic development, trade promotion, investment, and regional security which in turn create a new environment for development in the region. Moreover, with the 'Free and Open' Indo-Pacific Strategy, the US and QUAD will actively contribute to the maintenance of regional stability and prosperity as well as maritime security, promoting international cooperation.

Secondly, the prospect of cooperation between Vietnam and India in the Indo-Pacific region is based on the confluence of economic and strategic factors of the two countries in the region. Vietnam and India are two countries with a strategic partnership, which are two important players in two oceans: the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. While India plays a leading role in the Indian Ocean region, Vietnam occupies an important geographic position in the Pacific region, especially, Vietnam which has an important role in ASEAN. Today, despite the complex changes in the geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific region, the convergence of strategic interests between India and Vietnam is a solid foundation for the cooperation of the two countries. Vietnam and India have numerous favorable conditions to become important partners, contributing to building a free and open area. Putting Vietnam-India relations in the strategic context of 'Indo-Pacific: Free and Open' is, therefore, a good prospect for both countries. Based on a comprehensive strategic partnership as well as similarity in assessing strategies, economic benefits, political values, and common security interests of both Vietnam and India, certainly, diplomatic, economic, and military relations will become deeper. Vietnam and India were elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership in September 2016. Since then the bilateral and multilateral relations in all areas got deepened and became more practical. According to President Ram Nath Kovind:

> Vietnam and India share a vision for the Indo-Pacific region, of which the South China Sea is a critical component. We share a vision of a rules-based order that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity, ensures freedom of navigation and over-flight, as well as unimpeded commerce (…) We are both ancient maritime nations and are stake-holders in the commerce, security, and stability of the Indo-Pacific region. Above all, we share the same values (Indianexpress 2018).

Thirdly, India, and Vietnam have much in common. Both are gradually shifting from balanced power in the regional and global context to become important actors in international relations. Both have adjusted 'multilateral' foreign policy in international relations. With new realities – geopolitics and geo-economy, Vietnam is even more in line with India's plan in all aspects than ever before, especially in India's Act East Policy. In particular, security and defense cooperation continues to be an important pillar of India-Vietnam relations. At a time when the Chinese and the US trade confrontation is heating up, India and Vietnam can create mechanisms and tools to bring trade and investment to new heights. The mission of the two governments is to make Indian - Vietnamese relations transform. Even though the 'Indo' in 'Indo-Pacific' represents the Indian Ocean and not India, the global community expects India to play a major role in terms of ensuring a maritime environment that is conducive for economic growth and development (Kuo 2018). India also sees ASEAN as a fundamental element for the structure of the Asian economic community to bring about peace and prosperity in the region. With the central position in the ASEAN region, Vietnam is an important partner in the relationship between India and ASEAN. The new context in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean contributes to the two countries' efforts to cooperate, not only in trade but also has great potential in the areas of economic defense, science, and technology, infrastructure development.

Fourthly, in the context of the US deploying the 'Indo-Pacific: Free and Open' Strategy, equal and free competition will be created, completely independent of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. On the other hand, this strategy creates more motivation and resources to strengthen the defense and security potential of countries in the region including Vietnam and India. The two countries have the opportunity to take advantage of factors such as technology, capital, contributing to socio-economic development, strengthening national defense and security, dealing with traditional and non-communication security challenges. At the same time, there is also a favorable condition for Vietnam-India to promote trade and investment exchanges and promote defense and security cooperation with each other and with other partners in the region. Also, the adjustment of the US's 'Indo-Pacific: Free and Open' Strategy raises strong competition in relations between major powers, creating opportunities for Vietnam-India as well as countries in the region to take the advantage of cooperation to build

and enhance scientific and technological potentials, serving the modernization of their army.

Fifthly, in the 'Indo-Pacific: Free and Open' context, India is an important factor, directly involved in securing security in the open Western Pacific region. India will become an active partner within the framework of the 'Indo-Pacific: Free and Open'. Thus, Vietnam has favorable conditions to promote relations with India in the field of defense and security. On the contrary, as an important subject in ASEAN, Vietnam has made an important contribution to the implementation of India's Act East Policy. This platform contributes to promoting bilateral relations at bilateral as well as multilateral levels. Besides, Vietnam has always maintained its foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, multilateralism, and diversification of international, which attaches great importance to enhancing traditional friendship and multi-faceted cooperation with India.

Finally, Vietnam and India can play a leading role in the Indo-Pacific Ocean by strengthening bilateral relations and strengthening coordination in regional and sub-regional multilateral initiatives such as 1) APEC: because Vietnam not only is a close partner to India in the Indo-Pacific but also one of the important components in APEC, so it has great potential to play a facilitating role for India officially became a full member of APEC. Vietnam itself has repeatedly mentioned support for India becoming a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and joining APEC; 2) EAS: Vietnam and India are important partners and support regional cooperation on priority areas identified in the EAS framework such as energy, finance, education, health, epidemics, and ASEAN connectivity. And in the future, it is possible to expand into maritime cooperation. Based on this foundation, the two countries will become important partners to peacefully resolve maritime disputes under international law and expand cooperation on infrastructure and bilateral connections; 3) RCEP: This institution is led by ASEAN including Japan, Korea, China, India, Australia, and New Zealand - this is an important mechanism in the current system of multilateral mines. As a trade agreement covering the areas of goods, services, investment, economic and economic cooperation, competition, and intellectual property, RCEP is expected to bring free trade agreements goods to the countries in this institution, including both Vietnam and India. This is an opportunity for Vietnam and Asia to participate in the supply chain of the world economy currently operating effectively in Southeast Asia. As members of RCEP, both countries can play an important role in promoting negotiations to establish a successful regional economic integration model in the Indo-Pacific.

However, despite several advantages, the 'Indo - Pacific: Free and Open' context has also created many geopolitical changes which are challenges for Vietnam – India relations.

First, in terms of security, in the Indo-Pacific region, there are existing strategies of major countries at the same time, the 'US-Indo-Pacific: Free and Open' Strategy and China's Belt and Road Initiative. Thus, the confrontation between these initiatives threatens to push the region into intense competition, especially in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. In particular, the trade war between the US and China also partly affects India and Vietnam relations. This context also makes countries in the region continue to increase arms race and the situation is more complicated. Thus, this is likely to make Vietnam-India head into that common spiral. Currently, territorial disputes in the South China Sea have not been resolved. While both Vietnam and India support a law-based order, China has its claims in the sea. This will make it very difficult for countries to maintain the 'free and open' area.

Second, there is a gap between Vietnam and India within the Indo-Pacific geography which leads to differences in strategic priorities. Besides, the two countries differ in their perception of the nature of the threat China poses in the Indo-Pacific region.

Third, obstacles to the development of Vietnam-India relations from the cultural, religious, political-institutional factors as well as lack of mutual understanding and limited information about each other's market.

Fourth, the impact of competition among major power in the Indo-Pacific region. This region is fast changing with many intertwined trends, such as competition for influence as well as increased interdependence among countries (great countries as well as middle and small countries), that poses a question for Vietnam-India cooperation.

CONCLUSION

Vietnam and India have a long-standing relationship with similarities in terms of culture. Also, there is a common interest in cooperation and development. Therefore, strengthening and improving the effectiveness of Vietnam-India cooperation becomes crucial for each country, as this will fall in line with the new developmental trend of the Indo-Pacific region. In the future, it is hoped that the Indo-Pacific region will grow dynamically and become a driving force for the development of the world economy. With the new approach, India - a large country, pursuing rules and order, will be a positive force and factor for stable, peaceful, and prosperous development in the region. Research results indicate that in this context, when the 'Indo-Pacific: Free and Open' Strategy gets deployed, Vietnam and India with its geostrategic advantage - having

important resources for development, and new opportunities, must jointly identify and articulate the Indo-Pacific's vision effectively to turn the XXI century into an Asian century, thereby, strengthening the India-Vietnam relations to further contribute to peace, stability, and security in the region.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats we analyzed above are sketches for the overall picture of Vietnam-India relations now and in the future of the Indo-Pacific region. Potential and barriers, opportunities, and threats are related to each other. If promoting strengths and potentials, will reduce barriers, overcome weaknesses and threats. On the contrary, removing a barrier will contribute to the full potential and reduce other threats. To do that, it is necessary for the great consensus and determination of the two countries. At the macro level, Vietnam and India already have strong relationships, loyalty, and high political beliefs. At the strategic level, the two countries need to promote the intelligence and dynamism of the two communities, including important scholars, intellectuals, leaders, line ministries, branches, and localities. Believing that Vietnam-India relations in the context of the Indo-Pacific region will increasingly develop, enrich and strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries for the national interest, for peace, stability, and development of the region and the world.

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CHINA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY:
EVOLUTION, CHALLENGES, AND THE GREEK CASE

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Abstract: *The construction of a positive international image is profoundly correlated with advancing one's national interests abroad. Influencing foreign audiences and creating multisided links with countries of interest, is the main objective of public diplomacy. In the highly interconnected XXI century, countries have increasingly invested in that practice, assisted by major technological advancements. China is not an exception. The current paper will examine in which ways the latter conducts public diplomacy and through which actors. The study will also try to showcase the evolution and challenges that took place in this domain. Afterward, the case study of Greece will be considered, presenting the Chinese actors engaging in the country, the practices they use, and how the bilateral relationship has been affected. The essay will conclude with estimating the total effectiveness of the practices, possible challenges that exist, and several insights for future reference.*

Keywords: *China; Greece; Public Diplomacy; Foreign Policy; Bilateral Relations*

INTRODUCTION

Public diplomacy as a practice has rapidly developed during the XXI century thanks to the technological advantages of the new digital era and the acknowledgment that image matters. Ministries of Foreign Affairs around the globe are investing in such practices to promote the image of their country on the international scenery and of course their national interests. In China, public diplomacy practices are starting to be emphasized by the Central Committee of the Party as a significant domain for the foreign policy of China, in search of being established as a global power.

Nevertheless, the term 'public diplomacy' is often ambiguous and confused with the similar term of 'soft power'. Both of them are referring to policies aiming to influence foreign countries and promote national interests. The most common definition of public diplomacy is the "country's communication and engagement with foreign publics to support national interests" (Hartig 2016). In the meantime, according to the initiator of the concept of soft power, Joseph Nye, the term refers to "obtain what you want through cooperation and attraction" (Hartig 2016), denying the use of force or coercion. To achieve the latter, instruments such as culture, values, ideas, and policies, in general, are utilized. As a result, for clarity for this paper, public diplomacy is understood to be a tool of soft power, which may also use cultural links and same values with other countries, to influence foreign audiences.

Although difficult to distinguish the terms, it can be accepted that a public diplomacy is a tool of a country's soft power, projecting its image abroad through numerous practices that will be examined in the paper. The case study examined is that of the People's Republic of China. How China conducts public diplomacy, which actors are engaged, how it is orchestrated and executed, and which tools are used, and what are the main goals of engaging and investing so much in this sector, are some questions trying to be answered in this paper. In the second chapter, the paper will examine how these practices took place in Greece, a country of interest of China in Europe if they were effective and the ultimate goals of Chinese engagement. The main hypothesis of the paper is that the Chinese advancement of public diplomatic practices has indeed assisted in the establishment of a positive image in countries around the world. Specifically, in the case of Greece, the bilateral relationship has been enhanced and the public diplomacy of China was effective enough that managed to acquire political and economic gains for the country. The essay will conclude by estimating the total effectiveness of the practices, possible challenges occurring, and changes needed to be made in the years to come.

CHINESE PUBLIC DIPLOMATIC PRACTICES AND ACTORS

Public diplomacy is a fairly contemporary term in China. Until the latest years, Chinese officials were referring to 'civil diplomacy' or 'external communication' since there is no equivalent word of 'public' in Chinese and if it is, it has the definition of "governmental" (Zhao 2019). The former 'external communication' practices of China were not developed enough and created more issues than it could solve. The old practices were similar to propaganda mechanisms since they were focusing on a single way flow of information, guided by the central government, without interaction or engagement with the receiving side (Hartig 2016). This has caused serious consequences since foreign audiences, especially in the West, created a negative image of the country, demonizing China, and its intentions.

The contemporary diplomatic practices of China in this domain, however, have changed. Since the 1990s, the country has altered its perception of public diplomacy, trying to engage and listen to foreign audiences. The Chinese officials well understood the significance of public image since the country has rapidly grown large in political and security terms, becoming the second-largest economy worldwide as well. The new concept of communication with foreigners has as the main aim to introduce the real China, its peaceful intentions and respond to the Western media negative representation of the country as a global multisided threat (Hartig 2016).

Unquestionably, the 'China Threat Theory' is a strong liability and challenge for the country, since it is widely used by foreign officials to describe Chinese intentions (Wang 2011). According to this perception, the country is considered to be a severe economic and military threat with imperialistic views (e.g. in the South China Sea). Asian capitals are constantly worrying about the increasing military power and muscle-flexing of China. In the meantime Western and African countries also doubt its intentions being nervous and suspicious about trade deficits, job losses, and more financial threats (Scott 2015). Concurrently, chronic domestic problems such as environmental issues, human rights violations record, the authoritarian model of governance of the country, and policies towards Tibet, Taiwan, and minorities are considered serious challenges of the Chinese effort to promote a positive global image (Wei 2016).

As a result, China is sensitive about its image and officials have formed specific policies and goals to change 'misleading' perceptions of the country (Chang and Lin 2014). The main orchestration of Chinese public diplomacy began in 1998 by Zhao Qizheng, the Minister of the State Council Information Office (SCIO) at the time. He clearly understood the importance of a positive global image for the country. To achieve it, he increased press conferences, organized meetings with foreign journalists, and initiated the use of the English language. Even if it is well admitted that a lot of domestic issues cannot go public, there was the first serious effort by a high-level Chinese official making an effort to create a positive image abroad (D'hooghe 2008).

A few years later in 2003, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party introduced a new 'warfare concept', including a sector of 'public opinion warfare'. The aims of it are gaining positive feedback and influence both domestically and internationally, shaping a positive image of the country, and promote national interests (Wang 2011). In these bases, the Chinese public diplomacy has been shaped for the following years until now. Consequently, China is continuously trying to promote an image of a country that is focusing on creating a peaceful "Harmonious World" and being considered at the same time as a trustworthy, reliable economic and political partner (D'hooghe 2008). The rhetoric of public diplomacy is of paramount importance. Due to misinterpretations in previous practices, where the rhetoric was seen as propaganda by Westerners, the new Chinese narrative has changed. To reassure foreign audiences that China is a pacifist global power, some alterations have been made: for instance, instead of using the terms 'Great Power', 'Peaceful Rise' and 'Harmonious Society', Chinese officials now use 'Responsible Nation', 'Peaceful Development' and 'Harmonious World' (Scott 2015). By the language structure and the careful choice of English words and translations, is easy to understand the importance officials give to create a positive narrative, internationally oriented.

In addition to the aforementioned narrative, another practice in public diplomacy is the vast utilization of Chinese traditional culture. Since 2012, China has taken advantage of its approximately five thousand year's cultural tradition to enhance international cooperation. Its apolitical nature is ideal for approaching foreign audiences, making culture the cornerstone of its public diplomacy (D'hooghe 2008). Some cultural practices in this domain could be the strengthening of cultural exchanges, the utilization of cultural artifacts in expeditions between museums, the organization of Cultural Years in foreign countries, and the Chinese language teaching organized by Embassies and the Confucius Institutes (Zhao 2019). As a result, promoting and creating cultural links is an effective way to approach foreign governments and audiences.

Finally, another major instrument, both in the public diplomacy and economic domains, is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Inspired in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, it aims at connecting Asia with Europe and Africa via numerous maritime and land corridors. In economic terms, its goal is to advance "policy coordination, infrastructure connectivity, unimpeded trade, and financial integration" (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development n.d.). This Initiative has been perceived as a tool for increasing Chinese soft power and advancing its international image via the countries and regions which participate in the project. According to Voon and Xu (2019), the Chinese investments in the BRI countries have brought important advancement in its soft power. The project is also mentioned as "the most significant public diplomacy step taken by China this century" (Voon and Xu 2019), advancing political interactions and promoting a positive image by vast investments in developing countries around the globe (Voon and Xu 2019).

Hence, the Initiative has been a major step towards an overall effort of China to change and promote its image, showing the importance its officials give in upgrading the country's soft power tools.

ACTORS OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN CHINA

The actors conducting public diplomacy are numerous. There is a first distinction between state actors and non-state ones. As far as the first category is concerned, it is obvious that state actors are providing policy guidelines and are orchestrating the public diplomacy of the country. First and foremost, the main decision making organ of this domain is the Communist Party's Central Foreign Affairs Leading Group, renamed in 2018, as the Central Foreign Affairs Commission (Zhao 2019). It is responsible for the decision-making regarding public diplomacy in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and more importantly the Information Department. They also provide services to foreign media and journalists; they cover major events, and they collect information and intelligence of foreign media broadcast stations each time they are referring to China (Hartig 2016). The Public Diplomacy Office also organizes numerous activities addressing international audiences. Another main factor is, of course, the State Council Information Office, which as mentioned before decides alterations in practices and gives policy guidelines when needed (Scott 2015).

Other state actors not heavily involved but participating in the conduct of public diplomacy are the Ministries of Culture and Education. China's Ministry of Culture is of paramount importance since as mentioned beforehand, the traditional Chinese culture has been the cornerstone of public diplomatic practices. They organize large-scale cultural events such as the Chinese 'Cultural Years' or the Chinese Cultural Centers Abroad which are administrated by the Ministry (Hartig 2016). The Ministry of Education in the meantime is also organizing international educational exchanges and programs for foreign students promoting the Chinese language abroad (Wang 2011).

Non-state actors, however, are also extremely important at achieving effective public diplomacy, since state actors are usually viewed suspiciously. The backbone of non-state actors conducting these practices is of course the Confucius Institutes. They constitute overseas agencies around the globe, promoting the Chinese language and culture. They focus on organizing events, language teaching, information, and consultative services, and more. Of course, the goals of their presence are to create a positive image of China to promote its interests such as creating a new market and business contracts and facilitate business activities within the country of interest (Hartig 2016). Nevertheless, their presence is facing challenges. They are often accused of being propaganda instruments of the Communist Party, which undermine the freedom of teaching and are corrupted organizations without particular purposes.

However, their significance cannot be overlooked since they are contributing much to the public image of China abroad. Other non-state actors participating in this effort are of course Chinese mass media and information instruments which are considered to be, at least theoretically, independent. First of all, there is the Xinhua News Agency, the official state press agency. It is considered to be the "mouthpiece" of the CCP since it is a state-owned enterprise. It provides services in 8 different languages, including English programs (Scott 2015). It is easy to understand though, that it is rather ineffective in terms of public diplomacy success. It is regarded by the Westerners as a tool of state propaganda and the information given is not taken seriously into account (Hartig 2016). In the same domain, there is similarly the official newspaper of the ruling party, People's Daily and Global Times, both aiming at English spoken publics. China's Central TV, the most significant broadcast agency also is transmitting in 6 foreign languages and China's Foreign Language Publishing Bureau is also focusing on transmitting news and information about the country and its policies to international audiences (Hartig 2016).

Besides these actors, there are also a few more worth mentioning but not being in the spotlight. However, their contributions to the promotion of national interests are significant. Civil society groups and Chinese individuals are heavily participating in global networks abroad with foreign state and private actors (D'hooghe 2008). They are creating interpersonal links and lobbying to advance Chinese policies and create a positive ambiance towards the country. In similar ways, organizations, businesses, research institutes, or even universities are working towards the same goal with similar practices, providing the Chinese public diplomacy more legitimacy (Sun 2014).

CHINESE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: THE CASE FOR GREECE

In the previous chapter, there was an attempt to show how the Chinese narrative and public diplomatic practices, in general, are formed and utilized by different kinds of actors. This multifaceted diplomacy can be considered both effective and ineffective depending on the country under examination. In the case of the current article, Greece can be viewed as an interesting case study where Chinese public diplomacy has been exercised in various ways and has achieved to impact positively the local audience.

First of all, to better understand how Chinese influence has been put into place in Greece, some basic facts about the bilateral relations of the two countries shall be mentioned. Even if the two countries have few in common at a first glance, and historically an alliance or political connection has never been concretely founded, the relations between the two countries began with their official establishment in 1972 (Greek MFA). Steadily there has been growth in their relationship, with a couple of remarkable events. Firstly, the 2006 Strategic Partnership, when multifaceted cooperation in multiple domains has been agreed upon; secondly, the 2008 Beijing

Olympics, following 2004 one in Athens, where bilateral cooperation evolved including the transfer of know-how practices to achieve a better result in Beijing. Furthermore, in 2017, China has been declared as an 'honored country' in the Thessaloniki International Fair and the year 2017-18 was also declared as a 'Year of Cultural Exchanges between Greece and China', following cultural exchanges of artifacts between the two countries (Greek MFA). More recently, in early November 2019, cultural exchange activities took place, including groups of 'Travelling Comics' from China to Athens, to 'highlight the deepening friendship and cooperation' between the two countries (Tingting 2019).

It is also worth mentioning, how rapidly and positively the bilateral relations evolved and the two countries came much closer in the last few years. The Chinese public diplomacy can unquestionably take some credits. As mentioned previously, Beijing's public diplomatic practices rely heavily upon the promotion of its traditional culture. This was the main practice used both in its narrative and actions in the case of Greece. In the statements of both Head of States after their bilateral meetings, the common value of enjoying 'centuries-old cultural heritages' was specifically, and numerous times, highlighted (Lihua, Staikos, Xushan, Xiachao, and Meicen 2015). This link lies in the fact that both countries have severely influenced the Western and Eastern civilizations respectively and to clearly understand this linkage, multiple people-to-people exchanges and cultural exchange activities, as mentioned before, have been organized through the years. As a result, the Sino-Greek cooperation in the cultural sector could be considered a strong basis for bilateral relations. The period 2007-2008 was declared as the 'Cultural Year of Greece to China', following the 2017 'Year of Cultural Exchanges' as mentioned above, and of course, the 'Ancient Civilization Forum', orchestrated in Athens, in which China accepted the invitation (Lihua *et al.* 2015). Lastly, the Confucius Institute at the Athens University of Economics can also indicate the cultural penetration of Beijing in Greece (Bentis, Carulas, Mihalaris, and Papoutsas 2018).

Consequently, all the aforementioned actions and practices especially the last decade, have influenced, often indirectly, the Greek public and created a certain image of China, relatively positive, especially in comparison to its counterparts in the EU. The Greek public is generally not disposed negatively towards China, as studies have shown but it is not an enthusiastic audience either. There is an ambivalent ambiance in Greece. The positive image consists of certain perceptions of China as a global power. China is seen as a significant economic partner with a huge international influence that could support Greece politically as well if needed (Bentis *et al.* 2018). There is also commonly accepted that the two countries have strong and similar cultural heritages with 60.9% of Greeks believing that there are things in common, and 38.2% considering there are "a lot" in common (Bentis *et al.* 2018). China gains respect and admiration from the Greek audience and is viewed positively as a potential partner.

Furthermore, according to polls in Greece, conducted by the Public Issue poll agency, Greeks have a positive image of Chinese with a percentage of 71%, and for

China as a country, 70%, percentages considered relatively high for a European state. On the other hand, the Greek audience is not enthusiastic in regards to the form of government in China, the safety of products, which are perceived as of lower quality in Greece, the environmental challenges, and of course human rights violations that have been recorded through the years (Public Issue 2016). As a democratic country and member of the European Union, Greece and the public opinion is relatively sensitive regarding issues of authoritarianism and violations of human rights.

These liabilities mentioned above, are difficult to be confronted. China cannot change its form of government or the perception of its domestic politics in general. Hence, they are often considered as authoritarian or violating basic human rights by foreign observers. However, some measures can be taken. China can indeed conduct a more honest public diplomacy, admitting mistakes, and not trying to distort facts that are already known. For years, its practices have been viewed as propaganda and not as means to friendly approaching foreign audiences. Copying domestic practices of sharing information or news dissemination, create a false image to foreign audiences and the need for understanding their habits, values, and perceptions of the world is rather essential (Hartig 2016). Finally, China possesses numerous state actors regulating its public diplomacy, causing a lack of strategic planning and coordination. Stronger institutionalism with fewer limitations and better collaboration between key actors, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and State Council Information Office, is highly important for the construction of a concrete and effective multilevel public diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

The public diplomacy of China has long evolved over the years. The constant pressure and sensitivity of the country to create a positive image and be presented as a responsible global actor has forced the Chinese leadership to invest carefully in soft power and communication practices. The suspiciousness of Western publics and elites and the notion that Beijing is posing multilevel threats have been in the center of concern as also mentioned above. The occupation about the international profile of the country of course is connected to the national interests of China. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for instance and similar less huge investments in the economic realm could be at stake if the country is negatively portrayed. This is why public diplomacy efforts are more intense the recent years in certain key-countries such as Greece. Significant Greek Mediterranean ports, the one of the Piraeus area and the other at the city of Thessaloniki, are important for increasing Chinese investments in the European Union and setting in the meantime the basis in the region for its BRI (Reguly 2019).

As mentioned by Reguly (2019), the establishment of a 'foothold' in an EU-NATO member can increase its influence in the Balkans, the neighboring countries, and its European counterparts, since China could gain political support by creating an economic

interdependence with Greece and other European partners. That indeed happened in 2017, when the Greek Government blocked for the first time an EU Joint Statement at the UN regarding human rights violations in China (Emmotte and Koutantou 2017).

Consequently, the public diplomacy of China can be characterized as relatively effective. In the case study of Greece, China indeed managed to address the Greek public gaining its admiration and its trust as a potential economic partner. A high percentage of Greek citizens being favorable to Chinese nationals and China, in general, show the success of Chinese practices in the country. Of course, the promotion of the cultural tradition of China and the common economic interests are some major key points that developed the current perception of the Greek audience. Nevertheless, Greece is only one of the few cases of Western countries seeing China positively. More effort must be made for Beijing to confront suspiciousness and build trust in the international scene with a careful and more honest conduct of public diplomacy in the following years.

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GEOPOLITICS OF NEAR-SPACE: INCREASING NATIONAL POWER THROUGH SPACEPLANE DEPLOYMENT

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Abstract: *With the delimitation of airspace and outer space being a continuous issue, various arguments intend to analyze the viewpoint of the geopolitics of near-space being considered neither as part of Astropolitik, nor the geopolitics of airspace. Consequently, a comparative methodology in regards to the multidimensional objectives of geopolitics is followed: (1) evolving a theoretical military basis of spaceplane deployment; (2) examining the natural background of the geopolitics of near-space; (3) constructing the 'history-future' relation of the geopolitics of near-space; and (4) analyzing the increasing of America's national power through spaceplane deployment. Principle results obtained from the theoretical comparative methodology consequently determine the fundamental establishment of the geopolitics of near-space.*

Keywords: *Geopolitics; Near-Space; Military; Spaceplanes; National Power; International Relations*

INTRODUCTION

The true value of modern geopolitics is as a scholarly analysis of the geographical factors underlying international relations and guiding political interactions. Such an analysis does not determine the directions that statecraft must take. It does, however, present the desirable directions and alert policymakers to the likely impact of their decisions on these relations and interactions. Because geopolitics straddles two disciplines – geography and politics – its approaches vary according to frameworks of analysis common to each discipline. Since most early theories and concepts of geopolitics grew out of geographical thought, later applications by historians and political scientists often failed because they did not adapt their theories to the dynamic, complex nature of geographical settings (Cohen 2008, 11-12).

As the delimitation of airspace and outer space represents a continuous multidisciplinary issue, recent acknowledgments of the American Air Force's X-37B military spaceplane open new perspectives regarding the elaboration of geopolitics. The emergence of spaceplanes considers a comparative analysis for establishing a new branch by simultaneously incorporating its geographical characteristics, spaceplanes' practical military utilization, as well as US national politics and global influence. Theoretical adaptations must heavily rely upon the mesosphere not being entirely associated with airspace or outer space, as the geopolitics of near-space would primarily include a dynamic outline of establishing the relationship between man and geographical dominance, especially by military means, technology, and science. Its conceptual foundation would associate the expansion of regulated and strategized territorial boundaries toward a notorious environment that has often been ignored by both scientists and policymakers. To establish the geopolitics of near-space, a comparative methodology must be followed in regards to the multidimensional objectives of geopolitics. As geopolitics deals with basic aspects of the growth of civilization, its analysis in the form of a complete methodology has a fourfold objective: (1) to evolve a sound theoretical basis on which geopolitics could be developed as a systematic discipline; (2) to examine the nature of the development of contemporary regional and global geopolitics, including seabed and outer space; (3) to reconstruct the history of the geopolitics of any particular country or region or the globe; and (4) to analyze the national power of important countries. Thus, geopolitics has two aspects, theoretical and operative (Sen 1975, 2).

The aforementioned objectives can be adaptively analyzed upon the conceptualized geopolitics of near-space. However, both theoretical and operative aspects regarding such methodology cannot be equally scrutinized due to military spaceplanes not being often utilized during peacetime for research purposes on one hand, and not being ever utilized during warfare for military-related purposes, on the other.

Such acknowledgments complement the theoretical aspect, allowing us to speculate, estimate, and predict the potential establishment of the geopolitics of near-space, even though theory and practice often manifest a constructive correlation.

THEORETICAL MILITARY BASIS OF
SPACEPLANES OPERATING IN NEAR-SPACE

The military can be an integral partner of a government; it can be the government itself, an external 'kingmaker', or it may be a subordinate element unable to exert power or control over a government. Regardless, the role of the military and its history affect how a culture views defensive and offensive military operations (National Security Agency 1998, 23).

While military security capabilities reflect national strengths, appropriate knowledge is parallel toward the particular terrains. Theoretical military applications and strategies must heavily rely on the mesosphere as a geographical issue, including spaceplanes' continuous technological developments for the geopolitics of near-space to represent a well-structured discipline. To fully comprehend its main theoretical military-based standpoints, we must analyze how governing forces would achieve domination, national possession, and control of space through the mesosphere and its national implications. Both defensive and offensive near-space military operations emphasize the expansion of national force branches to guarantee national security, particularly as a response to subsequent foreign space-faring hostile actions.

New geographic influences require the study of technological and economic developments that strengthen states through national forces. Geopolitics of near-space would include physical factors (altitude, temperature, gravity waves, atmospheric tides, weather) and simultaneously exclude cultural factors associated with the geopolitics of land (population, race, industry, religion, communication), which is understandable since human society cannot thrive regarding such an unfathomable environment. Nevertheless, at the heart of any serious geopolitical analysis is the question of the power and borders of states that in any final instance are enforced by military power (Bergesen 2018, 169). An aerospace force is comprised of both air and space systems and the people who employ and support those systems and have the full range of capabilities to control and exploit the aerospace continuum (US Air Force 2000, 3).

Envisioning an 'Aerospace Force' allows the manifestation of aerospace warfare and superiority by a particular space-faring nation, as a special military branch. Since the infamous X-37B military spaceplane belongs to the American Air Force, developing the geopolitics of near-space considers military spaceplanes as appropriate to a fully conceptualized 'Aerospace Force' according to their technological classification and geographical utilization, respectively. Unlike reusable space vehicles designed for commercial or scientific applications, a military spaceplane would complete missions

including transportation, force projection, reconnaissance, and deployment of space assets supporting the strategic and tactical goals of theater commanders. Reliable access to space will drastically change how military goals are achieved (Rothermel 1997, 2). Near-space's potential for military aerospace operations during peacetime and wartime opens new dynamics of war within the military theory and creates new military capabilities in response to national security. The theoretical military basis of the geopolitics of near-space should not focus upon aerospace warfare itself, but the concept of near-space as an environment where aerospace warfare ideas are simultaneously based upon physical characteristics and geography. Consequentially, the purpose of military theory regarding the geopolitics of near-space would be to study, understand, explain and concern the potentials of aerospace warfare successes, primarily through military spaceplane deployment as components of military resources. While military theory conducts a multi-disciplinary analysis, sub-fields of military strategy, politics, international relations, legislation issues, operational processes, the dynamics of potential armed conflict between space-faring nations, national security or technological developments of military spaceplanes must revolve around the geography of near-space as an unfathomable environment, by influencing the creation of an effective and consistent theoretical basis concerning near-space potential military utilization.

THE NATURAL BACKGROUND OF GEOPOLITICS OF NEAR-SPACE

Geographical regions on Earth and in space are reasonably homogeneous areas containing distinctive topography, climate, vegetation, and cultural features (or lack thereof) that exert relatively uniform effects on military policies, plans, programs, and operations. Spacecraft crews become familiar with five geographic regions stacked one above the other as they fly through the troposphere, stratosphere, mesosphere, thermosphere, and exosphere en route to circumterrestrial space about 60 miles (95 kilometers) above Earth, where aerodynamic drag and frictional heat lose most of their significance (Collins 1998, sec. 3, para. 1-3).

A spaceplane is quite simply a vehicle that can fly as both an airplane in the atmosphere – generating lift from its wings – and as a spacecraft in a vacuum using rocket propulsion (America Space 2013). Since they focus on the mesosphere as the 'atmospheric border' between airspace and outer space, spaceplanes must adapt to near-space geographical characteristics to perform missions successfully. Such scientific and technological developments contribute to building one of the main theoretical standpoints of national governing forces belonging to prominent spacefaring nations that strive to achieve dominance in near-space during both peacetime and wartime. However, near-space vehicles need to be flexible, replaceable, and cost-effective, otherwise, their use may be very limited in military applications (Wang 2011, 15).

The geostrategic importance of near-space allows its further research to provide answers for technologically improving spaceplanes. Consequently, the development of geopolitics of near-space would not be motivated upon the necessary dependence on man upon the mesosphere, as it would be about the increasing dynamics of spaceplanes' revolutionary utilization. The direction of geopolitical thoughts concerning near-space does not correlate with basic human survival. Instead, it promotes more advanced thoughts, such as dominating a challenging geographical region to operate within, technologically speaking. Another argument that additionally examines the development of geopolitics of near-space is to compare its fundaments with both the geopolitics of airspace and Astropolitik, to conclude why it must be appropriately separated based on atmospheric classification, similar as to how the 100-km altitude ever since named the 'Karman Line' came thus into existence as the boundary separating Aeronautics and Astronautics (Fédération Aéronautique Internationale 2004). Namely, the geopolitics of air space, as a newly emerged geopolitical conceptualization, was inspired by the Russian-American advocate of strategic airpower – Major Alexander P. De Seversky, who in one of his most prominent books 'Victory through Air Power' (1942), claimed superiority of aviation power within air space, although being limited from both aspects of geography and equipment, as appropriately stated that it should be borne in mind that control of the skies is limited, in geographical extent, by the effective range of the conquering aviation. The reach of an air force, like the reach of a boxer's fist, can extend so far and no farther, depending on the range of the equipment (De Seversky 1942, 112). Regarding geopolitics of near-space, setting geopolitical limitation by the aspect of spaceplanes' capabilities to simultaneously operate in both airspace and outer space would be problematic, automatically 'expanding' state policy through natural geographical areas. Spaceplanes would need to operate specifically within the mesosphere's predicted atmospheric altitudes to determine near-space as a 'limited' geographical region. The conceptualization of geopolitics of near-space possesses a 'constant vs. variable' status, as appropriately compared to the contrasting mathematical values. While constants do not change their values over time, variables, on the other hand, change their values depend on the given equation. Similarly enough, if spaceplanes operate only within the mesosphere's atmospheric altitudes, the geopolitics of near-space would obtain a 'constant' status. However, if spaceplanes are predicted to operate in both airspace and outer space, then the geopolitics of near-space would obtain a 'variable' status. The lines between the 'constant vs. variable' statuses are blurred by spaceplanes' technological capabilities and further developments. Moreover, it is emphasized how De Seversky manages to describe air space as a particular geographical area, where political and geographical differentiation of contrasting regions should not necessarily influence the identification of specific non-military and military aims, along with their ultimate achievement:

> The air, it cannot be too often repeated, is a separate element, distinct from land and sea – an element with its space relations, its laws, and problems. It is a continuous and uninterrupted element enveloping the entire globe; strategically speaking, every political division, and every differentiation between air-over-land and air-over-water is artificial and meaningless (De Seversky 1942, 263).

In parallel, the mesosphere is already regarded as the separate, third layer of the atmosphere, characterized by particular environmental features and natural phenomena. Additionally, the concept of 'Aerospace Law' would represent a new legal regime applicable to all near-space operations, particularly performed by spaceplanes. It would differentiate near-space from airspace and outer space, although their delimitation represents a continuous issue regarding both scientific and legal disciplines and contribute to the elimination of legal impracticalities applying to aerospace vehicles, as their operations would be rigorously performed in neither airspace nor outer space. The establishment of Astropolitik, on the other hand, was inspired by the increasingly rapid technological developments that enabled the beginnings of space exploration.

Hence, the launching of the first artificial satellite Sputnik 1 in 1957 resulted in the birth of space law. From a geopolitical standpoint, space exploration indicates the extension of human reach and the governing of the areas in question, while allowing many national privileges of military, technological, scientific, legal, and political background. The role of space exploration primarily contributes to Astropolitik to find its foundations in the classical study of geopolitics, as well as further manifestations of international relations among spacefaring nations.

In its narrowest construct, Astropolitik is the extension of primary nineteenth-and twentieth-century theories of global geopolitics into the vast human conquest of outer space. In a more general and encompassing interpretation, it is the application of the prominent and refines realist vision of state competition into outer space policy, particularly the development and evolution of a legal and political regime for humanity's entry into the cosmos (Dolman 2002, 1).

Regarding the cartography of outer space, four essential types of orbits are taken into consideration: low altitude (between 150 km and 800 km above the Earth's surface); medium-altitude (ranging from 800 km – 35,000 km); high-altitude (above 35,000 km); and highly elliptical (with a perigee of 250 km and an apogee of 700,000 km). (Duvall 2009, 44) Spaceplanes' capability of accessing low-Earth orbit allows them to achieve predicted goals within that altitude. However, it would not represent their sole purpose, repeatedly associating such circumstances with the 'constant vs. variable' statuses. Extraterrestrial capabilities do not contribute much in strengthening space dominance, but can significantly influence national aerospace dominance. Between geography and geopolitics, the increasingly rapid technological developments are what currently

represents the most solid factor for potentially establishing the geopolitics of near-space. From both comparisons, it is noticed that the main reasons for the emergence of both the geopolitics of air space and Astropolitik differ. While the emergence of the geopolitics of air space contains a military background, the emergence of Astropolitik contains a semi-military background, giving particular emphasis to the scientific and technological development of artificial satellites.

"HISTORY-FUTURE" RELATION IMPACTS OF GEOPOLITICS OF NEAR-SPACE

The available evidence of near-space exploration provides the theoretical study of a new geopolitical model concerning its geographical area. Similar to historical developments of geopolitics, the impact of near-space upon contemporary human necessities of scientific, economic, and military background contribute to improving the notion of national power. However, near-space exploration would not necessarily 'reconstruct' the history of the geopolitics of any particular nation, as it would set-theoretical and practical implications for the US to rather 'construct' the history of the geopolitics of near-space. Consequently, establishing a 'history-future' relation allows for the geopolitics of near-space to be perceived as a futuristic geopolitical theory, while simultaneously setting the foundations of its historical developments. Additionally, it is presumed for the X-37B military spaceplane to characterize the beginnings of the geopolitics of near-space. Therefore, despite the terminological association to military objectives, as officially announced by the Air Force, the primary objectives of the X-37B are twofold; reusable spacecraft technologies for America's future in space and operating experiments which can be returned to, and examined, on Earth (US Air Force 2020).

Explaining human history through aerospace achievements emphasized the relationship between man and near-space as a challenging area to explore and dominate. Near-space exploration would dictate the course of its geopolitical application to influence the relevance of international relations, particularly with the US The future utilization of geopolitics of near-space, additionally, would also determine the extent to which geographical opportunities will be exploited depends on the strategy. That is a concern with the deployment and use of armed forces to attain particular political objectives (Gray and Sloan 1999, 2). Nevertheless, aerospace has become another terrain for a power struggle, and, similar to other systems, it is made up of various spatial elements that are organically connected. Based on their characteristic traits, these spatial elements may be suitable for accommodating and operating space tools that either serve military, civil, scientific, health care, and meteorological, etc. purposes, or, for sketching future alternative possibilities, as well as solutions for humankind's survival and power strategies in their relation to one another (Szilágyi 2017).

THE INCREASEMENT OF AMERICA'S NATIONAL POWER THROUGH HYBRID AEROSPACE VEHICLES

In the study of international relations, the term 'power' usually refers to national power – the power a state possesses to obtain compliance from other states. A state may use its power to promote and protect its vital interests in international politics, to save its population from external aggression, and to cooperate with other nations (Aneek 2010, 59). However, national power is regarded differently within hierarchical levels and cannot be equally associated among world nations. The great power system may be defined as the set of relationships among great powers, with their rules and patterns of interaction (a subset of the international system). Great powers have special ways of behaving and of treating each other that do not apply to other states. The most powerful of great powers, those with truly global influence, have been called 'superpowers'. This term generally meant the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, but most IR scholars now consider the United States to be the world's only superpower (Goldstein and Pevehouse 1994, 12). Furthermore, an eloquent exposition of the essence of hegemony is offered by William Safire. Safire comments that the word 'hyperpower' was coined by the French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine in 1999 to describe the power of the United States, which no longer could be adequately described by the term 'superpower' (Reid 2003, 82). Nevertheless, the main question within this chapter is as follows: How would the geopolitics of near-space increase America's national power and more importantly, through which element of national power?

One of the aims of geopolitics is to emphasize that political predominance is a question of not just having power in the sense of human or material resources, but also of the geographical context within which that power is exercised (Gray and Sloan 1999, 2). The geographical context, however, primarily acknowledges US national territory and does not directly associate with the technological development of spaceplanes or the scientific research of near-space. To identify the specific element of national power, it is necessary to look over and simultaneously classify them by origin and application. The national power of a state is the product of several elements. These are: (1) geography; (2) population; (3) natural resources; (4) popular support; (5) national character; (6) technology and military strength; (7) ideology; and (8) leadership. These elements are dependent on one another, and their combined positive contributions can make a nation powerful (Aneek 2010, 59).

The social element of technology and military strength perfectly describes spaceplanes' technological advancements as aerospace vehicles, as well as their deployment within the U.S. military. Additionally, military spaceplane deployment does not necessarily associate with conducting missions and operations of hostile nature. On the contrary, dual perceptions significantly contribute during peacetime (achieving

scientific research objectives) as much as they might contribute during wartime (achieving military objectives) since the military strength of the US is defined primarily by the global reach, power, and awareness that are derived from its capabilities in air and space (Air Force Magazine 1999). Such technological, scientific and military leverages further enhance the notion of national aerospace superiority. Everett Dolman, widely regarded as an indispensable thinker in this field, regards himself as a modern-day representative of political realism, as well as the intellectual heir of the classical geopolitical thinkers – primarily Alfred Thayer Mahan, Sir Halford Mackinder, and Nicholas Spykman – whose work he further develops in his own. His book published under the title 'Astropolitics', bears the subtitle 'Classical Geopolitics in the Space Age'. Dolman adapted Mackinder's sentence about the heartlands, widely regarded as a scientific adage, to our days. He emphasizes the significance of aerospace when he writes: "Who controls Low-Earth Orbit controls Near-Earth Space. Who controls Near-Earth Space dominates Terra. Who dominates Terra determines the destiny of humankind" (Szilágyi 2017). Despite Dolman's standpoint, the concept of the US possessing such great national power is criticized. For instance, Verdine is quoted as complaining about such hegemonic power: "We cannot accept a politically unipolar world, nor a culturally uniform world, nor the unilateralism of a single hyperpower" (Reid 2003, 82). Nevertheless, by acknowledging the Air Force's X-37B military spaceplane's record-breaking duration in near-space, the US has proven to possess all means necessary to establish national dominance upon the mesosphere concerning other spacefaring nations' future attempts of near-space exploration.

CONCLUSION

Principle results obtained from the comparative methodology concerning multidimensional fourfold objective conclude the potential establishment of the geopolitics of near-space, primarily based upon effective-resource spaceplane deployment. Both theoretical and practical understandings accumulate various elements of theoretical military basis, geographical characteristics, and natural phenomena, theoretical 'history-future' relation, as well as a national power, enabling the development of the geopolitical theory as a scientific discipline to study the mesosphere - a rather challenging geographical area - for its ultimate scientific and military utilization, consequently changing the realm of international relations.

Establishing the geopolitics of nears space is highly justifiable, as it is theoretically impractical to consider such political and military objectives as manifestations of the geopolitics of airspace or Astropolitik. Moreover, a significant increase in technological advancements regarding aerospace vehicles is evident, as commercial and military interests have begun to develop operating systems in near-space. Such systems include suborbital vehicles, stratospheric balloons, pseudo-satellites, and high-altitude drones.

Some will operate a few minutes, hours, weeks, months, or years (Dempsey and Manoli 2018, 235). One of the definite outcomes from the establishment of the geopolitics of near-space is to increase national power by spaceplane deployment with military strength. The geographical issue of the mesosphere, however, does not only manifest military-diplomatic nature in both theory and practice since its subject matter demonstrates multidimensional characteristics, which requires further analysis. And while the nature of geopolitics firmly transcends toward near-space, the gravity of its benefits will be primarily felt over the succeeding decades.

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THE ESCALATION OF CONFLICT BETWEEN ARMENIANS AND AZERBAIJANIS AND THE PROBLEMS OF PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH WAR

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Abstract: *This article explains why it is so difficult to achieve peace in Nagorno-Karabakh and what factors prevent the peaceful resolution of the conflict. This conflict is very difficult to resolve because the conflicting parties have contradictory geopolitical interests and cannot achieve consensus during negotiations. We have to take into account Russia's geopolitical interests in South Caucasus that Kremlin is interested in freezing this conflict to weaken both states, Azerbaijan and Armenia, and bring them back to Russia's orbit. Moscow aims to establish firm control over South Caucasus which was viewed in the past as a 'Russian backyard'. Russia still views South Caucasus as its zone of influence and tries to bring this region back into Russia's orbit.*

Keywords: *Nagorno-Karabakh; Conflict; South Caucasus; Russia; Armenia; Azerbaijan*

INTRODUCTION

Since 27 September 2020 new clashes erupted in the breakaway region of Nagorno–Karabakh, which quickly escalated into a full-scale war. The fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani troops lasted for six weeks. This conflict is often described as the first war in the history of modern warfare that has been won almost entirely with the help of drones. It is still unknown which side started the war, Yerevan and Baku blame each other for the escalation of the conflict. Despite efforts of the Russian brokered ceasefire, fighting continued until the 10th of November 2020 and neither side was willing to stop the war. On 9 October 2020, the Foreign Ministers of Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, Sergey Lavrov, Zograb Mnatsakanyan, and Jeyhun Bairamov, met in Moscow to end the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. After about ten hours of negotiations, the parties agreed to a humanitarian ceasefire, which came into force at midnight on 10 October 2020. Nevertheless, the hostilities did not cease, and fighting continued in the breakaway region.

The destruction has swept through this region with devastating force. Many towns and villages were razed to the ground and people were forced to leave front-line settlements. As a result of the bloody war, many settlements were transformed into ghost towns. The streets and houses are abandoned and deserted. The sound of distant artillery fire could be heard everywhere during the war. Those who decided to stay in the conflict zone were consigned to underground life in the shelters and bunkers. Both sides, Armenia and Azerbaijan, used long-range missiles to target civilian territories and populated areas.

THE EMERGENCE OF WAR IN THE 1990s AND
THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS TO END THE CONFLICT

This conflict started 30 years ago when the Soviet Union collapsed and ethnic tensions emerged in the South Caucasus. A brutal war erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, which finally ended with a cease-fire in 1994 after the deaths of more than 30.000 troops. Ethnic Armenians won control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region after a bitter and bloody war. They cemented their rule over this mountainous region, declaring independence and forging overland links with Armenia. With the help of Yerevan, Nagorno-Karabakh maintained control over its territory. After the 1994 exodus of ethnic Azerbaijanis, the area has acquired an exclusive Armenian character. According to the last Soviet survey, which was conducted in 1989, Armenians accounted for 77% of the population in Nagorno-Karabakh, while Azerbaijanis accounted for 22%. However, in the seven adjacent districts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, roughly 95% of the population was ethnic Azerbaijani. Regardless of the demographic composition, the two communities, Armenians and Azerbaijanis lived

and coexisted peacefully during Soviet times. But relations began to deteriorate between them in the final years of the Soviet Union. Armenia began to claim lands from Azerbaijan, ethnic tensions erupted and the trust that has been constructed for so many years suddenly evaporated within weeks. Hostilities between Armenians and Azerbaijanis escalated into a full-scale war in 1992. Many atrocities and war crimes were committed by both sides and countless villages and towns were razed to the ground.

A Ceasefire was signed in 1994 and peace talks began between the conflicting sides with the help of the OSCE Minsk group and three countries, Russia, France, and the USA acted as mediators in this conflict. In the intervening 30 years, nothing has been done to resolve the status of Nagorno-Karabakh and end the conflict through peaceful means. Peace talks were ongoing for 27 years but without any kind of progress. The OSCE Minsk Group, which is co-chaired by France, the Russian Federation, and the United States, tried to bring all sides to a peace settlement, but all attempts to solve the conflict peacefully were futile. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war was the result of diplomatic failure. There have been periodic violence and military skirmishes between the two conflicting sides. Over the last years numerous proposals were negotiated, but the most feasible road map, which is known as the Madrid Principles, was introduced in 2007.

That deal entails the following: First, districts surrounding the Nagorno-Karabakh should be returned to the Azerbaijani control; Second, Nagorno-Karabakh should be granted an interim status and provided with security guarantees and self-governance; Third, a corridor has to be established to link Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh; Fourth, the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh should be determined through a legally binding expression of will; Fifth, all internally displaced people, and refugees should be granted the right to return to their former places of residence; Finally, international security guarantees in the form of peacekeeping operations should take hold across the region.

Although the Madrid Formula presents the most feasible roadmap towards a peaceful resolution, the exact terms of each principle have been a matter of rigorous interpretation and negotiation. The biggest disagreement during negotiations was the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Yerevan has always rejected Nagorno-Karabakh's subordination to Baku and demanded guarantees of independence before engaging in any significant concessions. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan always refused to concede its territory to Armenia and thought that the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh was unacceptable and represented a serious threat to the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. While Armenia stresses the importance of self-determination to resolve the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan insists on maintaining its territorial integrity. As the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliev stated during the interview, self-determination is an important principle of international law, but it should not violate the territorial integrity of the country (Toradze 2020).

FACTORS THAT CAUSED THE ESCALATION OF RECENT CONFLICT

When the ethnic Armenian forces won the first war in 1994, they did not just take control of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, they also occupied seven surrounding districts of Azerbaijan forcing out the ethnic Azeri population. Armenians too had to flee areas that remained under Azerbaijani control. These Azerbaijani districts, which are now largely depopulated, served as an important security buffer for Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan has taken an uncompromising stance demanding the return of occupied territories.

In 2011 Russia proposed to start the Madrid principles with the return of Azerbaijani districts surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh. According to Lavrov's plan, Armenians had to start the handover of 5 districts of Azerbaijan in stages and Russian troops were to be deployed into the regions under the guise of peacekeeping. According to this plan, five of the seven areas were to be returned to Azerbaijan.

However, Armenia refused to make any concessions to Azerbaijan, and as a result, negotiations have remained at the deadlock since. There were numerous attempts to revive peace talks but much of it was a futile attempt. Armenians were satisfied with the status-quo and therefore denied making any concessions to Azerbaijan. If initially, after the end of the 1994 war, Armenians viewed the 7 adjacent districts of Nagorno-Karabakh as a bargaining chip during negotiations and were ready to make concessions to Azerbaijan, later any compromise to Azerbaijan was perceived as an act of betrayal of Armenia. Before the outbreak of the war, there was a widespread view in the Armenian society that all territories, even the seven adjacent districts of Nagorno-Karabakh, should remain under the firm control of Armenia.

The Armenian leadership in Nagorno-Karabakh added fuel to the fire when it decided to incorporate the seven Azerbaijani districts into its administration. New provisional borders were drawn, new roads were constructed and the abandoned Azerbaijani settlements were given Armenian names. Meanwhile, historical sites that were located in the Azerbaijani districts were embedded in Armenian banknotes. This was a clear indication and sign that Armenia did not intend to solve the Karabakh conflict peacefully and make any concessions to Azerbaijan. On top of everything, the Armenian government started to resettle ethnic Armenians from various parts of the world in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Before the outbreak of the war, the Armenian government had a plan to resettle Lebanese Armenians in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and to create Armenian settlements in the Azerbaijani districts. These dangerous and provocative actions illustrated that Armenia was effectively annexing 20% of the Azerbaijanian Land. Not surprisingly any attempt of negotiations failed and peace talks remained paralyzed. Despite the many efforts of the international community to revive the peace talks, nothing could be done to reach a consensus among the conflicting parties.

Political rhetoric became increasingly belligerent on both sides. Azerbaijan many times warned the international community that it intended to liberate occupied territories by force, while Armenia threatened to take even more territories in the next war. Armed conflict was inevitable and in September 2020 large-scale hostilities erupted in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Both sides, Armenia and Azerbaijan have used sophisticated weapons and missiles to gain a strategic advantage in this bloody war. Azerbaijan has achieved total air superiority thanks to the drones that it bought from Turkey and Israel. Azerbaijan has used two types of drones during the war: The Turkish made Bayraktar drones and Israeli made 'Kamikaze' drones. Over the last years, Turkey has increased its efforts to strengthen its influence in the Caucasus region. When the conflict broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh, Turkey saw an opportunity and offered moral, political, and military support to Azerbaijan. In summer 2020, the two states held joint military exercises in Azerbaijan, and Turkey's supply of weapons to Azerbaijan dramatically surged, which included sophisticated weapons and advanced drones. It seems that this conflict was carefully planned for years by Turkish and Azerbaijani military officials. Emboldened by Turkish support, Azerbaijan has decided to retake the Nagorno-Karabakh region by force.

While Azerbaijan has made some modest territorial gains, it hasn't swept the board as its military leaders had originally hoped. The Second Karabakh War highlighted the significant technological superiority of the Azerbaijani army. The armed forces of Azerbaijan managed to advance rapidly on certain sections of the front and regained control over a significant part of Nagorno-Karabakh, namely, its southern section. Azerbaijani army captured nearly the entire area near the border with Iran. Azerbaijan was able to gradually retake a significant part of the occupied territories around the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, including the Jabrayil, Zangilan, Fuzuli, and Qubadli districts. After liberating these territories, the armed forces of Azerbaijan advanced rapidly towards the Lachin corridor, which is a key supply line for the Armenians. The seizure of the Lachin corridor was the main objective of the armed forces of Azerbaijan because without the Lachin corridor Armenia's main artery to Nagorno-Karabakh would be cut off. Heavy fighting took place in the directions of Khojevand (Martuni) and Lachin, as well as on the northern front. Armenians did not manage to launch any effective counteroffensive and were constantly retreating during the war. The culmination of the war was the capture of the historic center of Karabakh, Shusha, by Azerbaijan, after which the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia signed a deal to end the Nagorno-Karabakh war (Bragvadze 2020).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF 2020 NAGORNO-KARABAKH WAR AND RUSSIA'S GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS IN SOUTH CAUCASUS

Armenia had suffered significant military setbacks at the hand of Azerbaijani forces. Not only has it lost most of the Azerbaijani districts it occupied in 1993, but also a significant part of Nagorno-Karabakh. Under the peace deal, the borders of Nagorno-Karabakh have been redrawn and the armed forces of Armenia must leave the Armenian-controlled territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh by 1 December 2020. While the Azerbaijanis called the deal a victory, Armenians have called it a national humiliation. Armenia's Prime Minister Nicole Pashinyan described the deal as an unbelievably painful decision.

Russia is a military ally of Armenia and maintains a military base in this country. Armenia is a member of Russian led Eurasian Economic Union, as well as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The CSTO is a military-political block under Russian auspices. It was expected that Russians would help their ally Armenia in this war. Putin, however, has refused to provide support to Armenians, because fighting was taking place not on the Armenian soil but in the Karabakh region, which legally belongs to Azerbaijan. So, in legal terms, Russia could not get involved in this conflict because the war was not widespread on the Armenian territory. That explains part of the reason why Russia refused to help Armenia and remained neutral in this conflict. The other reason is that Putin detests the pro-western Armenian government and the Armenian prime minister Pashinyan for his anti-Russian activities. When Pashinyan came to power in 2018 he decided to get rid of corrupt pro-Russian politicians and government officials and decided to replace them with pro-Western lawmakers. With these new reforms, Pashinyan intended to diminish Armenian's reliance on Russia. However, these Anti-Russian actions have angered Putin and have raised alarm bells in the Kremlin (Oborne and Westad 2020). Kremlin would like to reverse the process and bring back pro-Russian politicians to power.

Interestingly, the former president of Armenia, Kocharyan who is viewed as Pashinyan's rival and enjoys very good relations with the Russian political establishment, is back in the political scene. Russia is looking forward to changing the political leadership in Yerevan and therefore, does not offer any kind of help to Pashinyan. After the war, angry people in Yerevan stormed the parliament and demanded the resignation of Pashinyan for giving up the territory to Azerbaijan. Because of these large-scale protests, it is unlikely that Pashiniyan will remain in power.

The final reason for Russia's non-involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is related to the geopolitical objectives of the Kremlin in the South Caucasus region. Russia's actions should be analyzed from the geopolitical point of view, Moscow is not interested in solving the conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. It is in Kremlin's interest to freeze the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to weaken both states, Azerbaijan and

Armenia, and bring them back to Russia's orbit. Moscow aims to establish firm control over South Caucasus because of its enormous strategic importance as a bridge between Europe and Asia. Moscow does not like the fact that foreign powers try to gain a foothold in this strategically important region, which was viewed before as a 'Russian backyard'. South Caucasus borders energy-rich regions such as the Middle East, the Caspian Basin, Central Asia, and the shortest route from Europe to Asia pass through this region. South Caucasus is a very important transport corridor and a vital link between East and West. This region can play a very important role in increasing trade, economic and commercial links between Asia and Europe. Over the last years, the development of transportation infrastructure has increased considerably the strategic significance of this region. Russia wants to strengthen its influence in the post- Soviet space and therefore, sees the West and other great powers as its geostrategic competitors.

The Cold War, which ended in Europe in the 90s, is now raging in South Caucasus. Now, Caucasus is the region where geopolitical and geo-economics interests of great powers collide with each other. They all try to gain a foothold in this strategically important region. Russia views all other powers as its rivals and tries to bring back this region under its firm control (Modebadze 2018).

The Russian government knows that frozen conflicts are a serious headache for Caucasian states and prevent their integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Kremlin views the expansion of NATO as a threat and wants to prevent the integration of Caucasian states in this organization. Russia's main objective is to stop the eastward expansion of NATO. NATO enlargement and moving military infrastructure closer to the Russian borders are seen as foreign policy threats. Russia is aware that as long as the South Caucasian states are involved in ethnic conflicts and wars, their chances of integration into NATO and Euro-Atlantic structures is very low. Thus, it is in Russia's interest to maintain political, economic, and social instability in the Caucasus to prevent the expansion of NATO and the incorporation of Caucasian states into NATO.

Russia is the only winner of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. The deal that was signed on 9 November benefits Russia. It plays a vital role in strengthening Russia's presence in the South Caucasus region. This deal allows Russia to deploy 'peacekeeping forces' to the Nagorno-Karabakh region (Dyer 2020). By sending peacekeeping forces to Nagorno-Karabakh Russia establishes a permanent military presence in Azerbaijan. Apart from this, Russia gains the right to control the Lachin corridor, which plays a crucial role in connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh. Lachin corridor is used by Armenia as a logistical route to send supplies into Nagorno-Karabakh. By controlling this strategically important corridor Russia has a chance to gain greater leverage over Armenia. Isolated and impoverished Armenia will become more dependent on Russia and its sovereignty will be jeopardized. As Russia's influence grows in the region, Armenia and Azerbaijan may become the satellite states of Russia in the future.

Another corridor, that Russia is going to use as a political weapon and leverage for controlling conflicting parties, is the strategic corridor that will connect Azerbaijan with Nakhichevan and Turkey. This corridor has a great strategic significance for Baku as it will be the shortest route from Azerbaijan to Turkey. According to the deal, Russian FSB's Border Troops have the right to control this corridor, which will play a crucial role in connecting Turkic speaking countries with each other. Azerbaijan and Russia may use this corridor for the implementation of large-scale energy projects. This deal helped Russia to increase its influence in the South Caucasus region (Esipov 2020). This new agreement is unlikely to end hostilities between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. On the contrary, it can provoke a war in the future, as both sides are very much dissatisfied with the fact that now Nagorno-Karabakh is firmly in Russian hands.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen above, it is very difficult to achieve peace in the South Caucasus and solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict peacefully for many reasons. First of all, we should take into account the fact that conflicting sides have contradictory geopolitical objectives and cannot reach a consensus during negotiations. Neither side is willing to make concessions and reach an agreement. We should take into account also Russia's geopolitical and geo-economic interests, the Kremlin would like to establish total control over the South Caucasus and does not want this region to become a European transport and energy corridor. Therefore, Russian authorities will always try to destabilize this region through frozen conflicts. Russia will always support separatist forces in this region to disrupt the realization of new and important megaprojects in the South Caucasus. Kremlin aims to prolong the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh to achieve its geopolitical objective in South Caucasus – weaken both states, Armenia and Azerbaijan and bring them back into Russia's orbit.

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INTERNATIONAL LEGAL STANDARDS IN COMBATING CHILD ONLINE SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

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Abstract: *The general international standards are being discussed in this article, as well as more relevant ones concerned with the problem of sexual exploitation and child abuse. Further, the article discusses a growing understanding of children's exposure to violence, strengthened commitments to secure their safety and protection, and significant international implementation efforts to mobilize support for prevention and response and to help change attitudes and behavior which condone violence against children. With the fast development of the internet and online social networks, the article ends with a conclusion in identifying criminal law benchmarks based on the previously identified general international standards.*

Keywords: *Child Rights; Sexual Exploitation; Abuse of Children; International Human Rights Standards; Online Exposure*

INTRODUCTION

Over recent years the protection of children from violence has evolved from a largely hidden and neglected topic into a growing global concern. Framed by international human rights standards, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Protocols, and guided by the United Nations study on violence against children, there has been a growing understanding of children's exposure to violence, strengthened commitments to secure their safety and protection, and significant national implementation efforts to mobilize support for prevention and response and to help change attitudes and behavior which condone violence against children. However, the fast development of the internet and online social networks has added challenges in the protection of children from sexual violence and abuse that happens online or is instigated through the internet as pointed out by the Global Alliance against Child Sexual Abuse Online:

> Every day, countless children around the world are sexually abused and exploited, and images and videos of the abuse are circulated. Already in 2005, an estimated one million child sexual abuse images were online. 50.000 new child abuse images are added each year. More than 70% of the reported images feature children below 10 years of age (Global Alliance 2020).

Child sexual abuse including online sexual abuse and exploitation is a particularly serious crime that has wide-ranging and serious life-long consequences for victims. In hurting children, these crimes also cause significant and long-term social harm (Communication from the Commission 2020). Therefore, it is paramount for governments to be in line with the fast-developing structures and to criminalize all forms of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children. To be able to do so certain international standards need to be followed and benchmarks to be developed. In the text below the general international standards are being explored, as well as, the more specific ones dealing with the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, to finally identify criminal law benchmarks based on the previously identified general international standards.

GENERAL INTERNATIONAL LEGAL STANDARDS IN COMBATING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION ONLINE

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN CRC 1990) is the most comprehensive document on the rights of children. It is the *Magna Carta* for the protection of children's rights. The Convention sets forward several substantive rights and also gives directions implementation measures. The CRC is also significant because

it enshrines, "for the first time in binding international law, the principles upon which adoption is based, viewed from the child's perspective" (Global Research Center 2007, 8). The CRC is primarily concerned with four aspects of children's rights (the four P's): participation by children in decisions affecting them; protection of children against discrimination and all forms of neglect and exploitation; prevention of harm to them; and provision of assistance to children for their basic needs (UN CRC 1990).

The CRC defines a child as "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, the majority is attained earlier" (UN CRC 1990, Art. 1). The CRC does not specifically refer to online protection of children's rights, because the time of its making does not correspond with the time of the emergence of the world-wide-web. The Convention sets some general international standards on which any law, measure, or procedure should be based concerning sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse of children. Consequently, the general international standards based on the CRC are:

Rights of the child: All actions are undertaken concerning children and children victims of sexual violence shall be guided by applicable human rights standards and in particular by the principles of protection and respect for children's rights as set out in the CRC (CRC General Comment 6 2009, 12). State obligations under the CRC apply to each child within the State's territory and all other children subject to its jurisdiction. Therefore, the enjoyment of rights stipulated in the Convention is not limited to children who are citizens of a state but must also be available to all children irrespective of their nationality, immigration status, or statelessness (UN CRC 1990, Art. 40). The involvement of child victims in criminal activities shall not undermine their status as both a child and a victim, or their related rights to special protection (CRC General Comment 6 2005, 13).

Non-discrimination: Every child shall have, without discrimination of any kind as to race, sex, language, religion, ethnic or social origin, birth, or another status, including immigration status, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his or her status as a minor (UN CRC, Guidelines 2019, 13).

The best interest of the child: The Committee on the Rights of the Child has highlighted in Article 3(1), that the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, as one of the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, alongside Articles 2, 6 and 12 (CRC General Comment 14 2013, 9). The principle was first seen in the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which uses it in Principle 2:

> The child shall enjoy special protection and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and socially in a healthy and normal manner and conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration (CRC General Comment 14 2013, 9).

This means that in all actions concerning child victims of sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse, whether undertaken in drafting laws, or by public or private social welfare institutions, police, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (UN CRC, Guidelines 2019, 17). Furthermore, in devising criminal legislation regarding sexual violence against children this principle shall be the guiding point.

Respect for the views of a child: A child victim who is capable of forming his or her views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting him or her. Respect for the views of the child will be maintained with the legal process, interim care and protection, and the identification and implementation of a durable solution. The views of the child victim shall be sought and given due weight by his or her age and maturity. The child shall be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting him or her, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law (UN CRC Guidelines 2019, 17).

Right to information: Child victims shall be provided with accessible information regarding their situation and their rights, including protection mechanisms, other available services. Information shall be provided in a language that the child victim can understand. Also, this principle applies to the right of children to be informed of the dangers of using the internet and the ways of preserving their safety (CRV GC 12 2009, 9-136).

Right to confidentiality: All necessary measures shall be taken to protect the privacy and identity of child and children victims to ensure the safety and security of the children and children victims and his or her family. The name, address, and all other information that could lead to the identification of the child victim or his or her family members shall not be revealed to the public or media. Exceptions may be made in circumstances such as to facilitate the tracing of family members or otherwise secure the wellbeing and protection of the child, with the informed consent of the child (CRC General Comment 16 2013, 21-23).

Right to be protected: Child victims are entitled to special protection measures, both as victims and as children, following their specific rights and needs. The State shall protect and assist child victims and ensure their safety (CRC General Comment 16 2013, 22).

These general principles also help to capitalize on the potential of the online environment to promote children's learning and freedom of expression; to support children in accessing, receiving, and imparting information; and to protect them from harmful materials and information, from unlawful interference with their privacy or correspondence, and from situations where their honor and reputation may be at risk.

SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Having explored the overall general standards regarding the base of any national action, legislation policy, and measure, concerning sexual exploitation of children and abuse over the internet, there are more specific international standards that derive from the overall general human rights standards. The Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents pledges for a more comprehensive and concerted global effort enhanced cooperation between different organizations and initiatives are particularly important in the light of challenges related to the information society (Rio Declaration 2008). In the face of the growing threat of cybercrime, common efforts to strengthen legislative frameworks, criminal justice capacities, international cooperation, and public/private cooperation are required and are regarded as the primary principles in fighting these crimes.

The CRC and its Optional Protocols, notably the Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (OPSC 2002, 1), provide important guidance for the realization of children's rights concerning sexual exploitation and abuse over the internet. They call for all measures, including legislative, policy, and educational initiatives, to be guided by the best interests of the child; to respect and support children's growing autonomy and agency, and to protect children from violence and discrimination.

The CRC does not specifically criminalize child sexual abuse images, although a prohibition on this material is implicit in, for example, the child's right to protection against "arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy" and to "unlawful attacks on his or her honor and reputation" under Article 16 (UN CRC 1990). However, in recent years, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has given increasing attention to ICTs and the internet in its concluding observations to periodic reports on the CRC and the adopted Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) (CRC Concluding observations 2013, 11). Its recommendations have highlighted crucial areas requiring further efforts, including the adoption of "a national coordinating framework to address all forms of violence against children, including on the internet"; a passage of comprehensive legislation "to criminalize all forms of child pornography and sexual exploitation of children on the internet" and the "solicitation of children for sexual purposes and accessing child pornography utilizing information and communication technology"; and measures to prevent publication and dissemination of pornographic material concerning children through surveillance mechanisms to automatically block offending internet service providers (ISPs) and other media, and taking prompt steps to establish an authority for internet safety, ISP licensing and checks for content harmful to children (CRC Concluding Observations 2014, 14).

The Committee's Day of General Discussion on 'Digital media and child rights', held in September 2014, contributed to further broadening the scope of the Committee's reflections in this area and to the development of rights-based strategies to maximize online opportunities for children while protecting them from risks and possible harm (CRC 2014). Further, the OPSC also provides important guidance in this respect. Article 1 of the OPSC requires States Parties to 'prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography,' where child pornography is, "(...) any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes" (OPSC 2002, Art. 1). Article 3 requires that each State party ensure that, as a minimum, "[p]roducing, distributing, disseminating, importing, exporting, offering, selling or possessing (...) child pornography" is fully covered under its criminal or penal law, whether such offenses are committed domestically or transnationally or on an individual or organized basis (OPSC 2002).

The OPSC requires that countries criminalize possession with the intent to distribute, disseminate, and sell. The OPSC also considers the obligations of States Parties to fight impunity. Article 4 requires each State party to "take such measures as may be necessary to establish its jurisdiction over the offenses (...) when the offenses are committed in its territory or onboard a ship or aircraft registered in that State" (OPSC 2002).

Given the global nature of the internet and the international dimension that characterizes much online violence, exploitation, and abuse, Article 6 calls on States Parties to "afford one another the greatest measure of assistance in connection with investigations or criminal or extradition proceedings (...) including assistance in obtaining evidence at their disposal necessary for the proceedings" (OPSC 2002).

Under Article 9, States Parties are required to "adopt or strengthen, implement and disseminate laws, administrative measures, social policies, and programs to prevent the offenses it refers to" (OPSC 2002). Paying special attention to especially vulnerable children is another concern expressed (OPSC 2002, Art. 6) as well as, "awareness in the public at large, including children, through information by all appropriate means, education and training, about the preventive measures and harmful effects of the offenses referred to in the present Protocol" (OPSC 2002, Art. 6). Article 9 also addresses the important issue of rehabilitation and compensation for children who have fallen victim to offenses involving images of child sexual abuse (OPSC 2002).

To add another instrument to the list, the Istanbul Convention which is an important novel addition to the international standards to fight sexual violence against women and children? It is important to point out that the Istanbul Convention requires States Parties to ensure that gender-based violence against women may be recognized as a form of persecution, encompassing girls under eighteen (CoE CETS 201, 2011). This is the first time that gender-related persecution is explicitly mentioned in an

international convention. The Istanbul Convention is a tool for the inclusion of a gender perspective into all measures to prevent and combat violence against children. The Convention requires States Parties to adopt legislative and practical measures to prevent and combat violence against women and girls, as well as, to coordinate measures through comprehensive policies (CoE CETS 201, 2011). It establishes an obligation to introduce gender-sensitive procedures, guidelines, and support services in the asylum process. It requires, among other things, that children are afforded adequate protection and support as victims and witnesses of domestic violence (CoE CETS 201, 2011).

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS TRANSLATED TO CRIMINAL LAW BENCHMARKS

The Rio Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents calls governments to ratify the OPSC, the Lanzarote and Budapest Conventions and to: "Define, prohibit and criminalize, following existing international human rights standards, all acts of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in their jurisdiction, irrespective of any stage of consent or marriage or cultural practice, even when the adult is unaware of the child's age" (Rio Declaration 2008, 8).

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) is the first treaty to address children's protection from sexual violence in the face of challenges presented by technological developments, and to identify as an offense the solicitation of children for sexual purposes through ICTs, often known as 'grooming'. The Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention) criminalizes offenses against and through computer systems, including child pornography; provides law enforcement with effective means to investigate cybercrime and secure electronic evidence, and offers a framework for international police and judicial cooperation in computer-related cases involving crimes against children. Both conventions can be adhered to by states from other regions, which is useful for having in mind the unlimited character of the internet.

The Lanzarote Convention aims to eradicate all sexual exploitation and abuse of children. It requires the criminalization of sexual exploitation and abuse, the criminal prosecution of perpetrators, and effective remedies and support for child victims (CoE CETS 201, 2007). The Convention defines sexual exploitation of children as a criminal offense. It provides effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanctions against prostitution, pornography, grooming, and sex-tourism and also covers sexual abuse. The Convention calls on state authorities; civil society and the private sector need to join forces to prevent sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, to protect the victims, and to end impunity. In this respect, the Lanzarote Convention insists on both national and international cooperation is a *facto sine qua non*, for effective eradication of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children and protection of victims.

The Convention also includes a monitoring mechanism, in the form of the Lanzarote Committee. This Committee as a monitoring body assesses the situation in the countries to identify challenges or obstacles to the effective implementation of the Convention and also effectively functions as an observatory of good practices and allows capacity building. Because the sexual exploitation of children over the internet is predominately a gender influenced practice, the Lanzarote Convention even though it covers all children without any particular focus on girls or boys, the Committee has requested the States Parties to specify how measures for victims and offenders take into account gender-specific requirements (AS/Soc (2014) OJ 01 rev 2014, 7). The results of this monitoring work will therefore serve to cast some light on the measures needed to prevent girls from becoming victims of sexual exploitation and abuse (AS/Soc (2014) OJ 01 rev 2014, 7).

Both treaties combined contain a comprehensive set of measures to address sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children both in the online and offline environment. Widely applied, they aim to contribute to global harmonization of criminal law, and this, in turn, is supporting the facilitation of international operational cooperation as underlined by Interpol and the Virtual Global Taskforce (AS/Soc (2014) OJ 01 rev 2014, 9) with the ultimate goal of eradication of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

Accordingly, Interpol reported on a follow-up initiative addressing online sexual abuse of children via delivering on operations targeting organized crime networks, behind cases of 'sextortion' globally. In 2014, for example, an operation organized and delivered by Interpol has resulted in the arrest of 58 persons that were also involved in the case of the Scottish teenager Daniel Perry, 17 years old that committed suicide in Scotland in 2013, after being a victim of online blackmailing. The operation as a first of its kind was a joint effort between Interpol Digital Crime Centre (IDCC), the Hong Kong Police Force and Singapore Police Force as well as of the Philippines National Police that led to the identification of almost 195 persons working for organized crime groups operating from the Philippines. In close cooperation with Scottish police, US Homeland Security Investigations the operation resulted in the identification of sextortion victims including in the UK, the United States and Indonesia, and the Philippines (Interpol 2014). Both, the Lanzarote and the Budapest Conventions represent international standards that may serve as benchmarks and may support the harmonization of criminal law aimed at protecting children against sexual exploitation and abuse (CoE ETC 185 2001). Article 3 of the Lanzarote Convention stipulates that the "sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children" shall include the behavior as referred to in Articles 18 to 23 of this Convention. The Budapest Convention covers child pornography in Article 9. Therefore, the Article has shown how the use of international child rights standards work has led to the steady and vast number of criminal law benchmarks to be fulfilled as minimal standards for countries within the EU and beyond.

The analysis uses these articles to show the overall agreed minimum international standards for the criminalization of sexual exploitation and abuse of children over the internet. The Directive on combating sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children and child pornography on which the European Parliament and the Council reached an agreement in June 2011 is another detailed document treating sexual exploitation and abuse of children over the internet (2011/92/EU). It states that the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse arguably constitutes the highest international standard for protecting children against sexual abuse and exploitation (CoE ETC 185 2001). The Directive is complementary to both, the Lanzarote and Budapest Conventions.

CONCLUSION

The CRC in its time of making and adoption did not consider the fast-growing development of the World Wide Web and its wider use as a threat to sexual exploitation and child abuse. Accordingly, it did not account initially for the online protection of children's rights, because the time of its making did not correspond with the time of the emergence. However, in recent years, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has given increasing attention to ICTs and the internet in its concluding observations to periodic reports on the CRC, by requiring states to conduct a set of measures within their national responses in responding to all forms of violence against children, including on the internet as well as provide for legislation that would criminalize various forms of child pornography and sexual exploitation of children on the internet, by halting the solicitation of children online for sexual exploitation and other forms of child abuse. Furthermore, these international child rights standards have overall affected the rise in the making and adoption of the so-called Lanzarote and the Budapest Conventions that represent international standards serving as criminal law benchmarks and support the harmonization of criminal law aimed at protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse online. In ending, the analysis has shown how the use of international child rights standards work has led to the rise of a vast number of criminal law benchmarks to be fulfilled as minimal standards for countries within the European Union and globally. Both treaties combined contain a comprehensive set of measures to address sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children both in the online and offline environment. Widely applied, they aim to contribute to global harmonization of criminal law which in turn will facilitate international operational cooperation including the Interpol as reinforced, with the ultimate goal of eradication of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

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CLASSICISM AND ORIENTALISM IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW GLOBALIZATION THEORIES

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Abstract: *The intense and dichotomous relationship between orientalism and classicism that has been created over the last decades of the XX century, reaches new dimensions through the rapid scientific growth, the discoveries of new historical sources and artifacts, and, most importantly, through the paradigms change in many scientific disciplines. This development is also influenced by the rapid and multifaceted societal transformations in the intensively globalizing world of the new millennium. In this context, the paper explores the new understandings of these two important conceptions in the research of the past, and their redefined scope and relation in the light of the globalization theories and through the paradigm of ancient globalization.*

Keywords: *Classicism; Orientalism; Globalization Theories; Globalization Avant la Lettre*

INTRODUCTION

The aspirations and different perspectives of oneself-awareness, as well as the process of self-discovering, have been related to significant aspects of religion and philosophy from antiquity to modernity, and have had a great impact on the development of many historical and cultural processes during different periods and in diverse geographies. In the domains of the intellectual and scientific, the objective analysis of oneself has been hailed for centuries as one of the most difficult, but also a most virtuous task that one researcher can work on. In ancient times these kinds of analyses were connected with the great knowledge of the 'wise', whereas the interest and the analyses of the questions related to 'knowing oneself' have been attributed to important thinkers, such as Socrates on the western or Sun Tzu on the eastern corner of the Old World since the IV century BC (Seigel 2005, 45-48).

In modernity, on the other hand, the analysis of 'oneself' and the related questions touching upon various areas of scientific exploration, additionally burdened with the ideas of the Enlightenment for the "objective science" and the "progress and prosperity" (Trigger 2006, 101), have proven to be one of the "most confusing" and "most slippery" areas in scientific research (James 1890, 330; Seigel 2005, 3). According to the famous French sociologist and philosopher Baudrillard the 'modern' European elites, "didn't believe anymore in the world's illusions, but in its reality" (Thomas 2004, 361). Precisely this 'objective science' of the last two centuries, which is referred to today by many as the "last and the worst of the illusions" (Thomas 2004, 361), has recognized its self and its professional traditions in the identity of the 'West' and the particular values developed in this 'theoretically designed' or 'imagined' geographical space in both antiquity and modernity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In reviewing the development and rethinking the paradigms of classical tradition and orientalism in scientific analyses, as well as their societal impacts, this paper opts for a more dynamic approach to the East-West dichotomies in both science and society. It suggests the models and theories of globalization as a new tool of great importance for overcoming the academic misconceptions created by these artificial dichotomies and relates to an understanding of early development of the Old World through the lenses of the globalization *Avant la Lettre.*

Contemporary academic research has incrementally increased its attention over the need for transcending the new ideas and scientific paradigms related to culture, identities, and globalization from modernity to antiquity. Thus, in the 2014 Cambridge University Press edition dedicated to globalization in the classical world, the editors Pitts and Versluysuse the already prominent and rather prescriptive quote of Morris that "we

should push the globalization analogy harder, applying to the ancient Mediterranean the same tough questions that scholars ask about connectedness in our own time" (Morris 2005, 33; Pitts and Versluys 2015, 3). A plethora of contemporary analyzes relate to this new scientific trend and provide new articulation of the relations of the classical culture and the cultures of the East (Rossi 2011; Strootman 2011; Mairs 2012; Versluys 2014). It adds to the contemporary authors that acknowledge the Eurocentric and ethnocentric bias of the old classicistic paradigms related to Western colonial and imperialistic worldviews (Dietler 1998, 296–98; Traina 2005; Hall 2011), and the enthusiastic post-colonial turn that has emphasized the new role of the East and the Eastern in the global antiquity and the hybridization of the ancient and 'classical' culture (Deagan 1983, van der Spek 1987; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993; Young 1995; Stewart 1999; Ferguson 1992; White 2010). Finally, 'the propositions of Morris' and common theoretical leanings are present and becoming increasingly dominant in many contemporary analyses of the classical epoch and the history of the Old World, as a whole (Harvey 1990; Giddens 1990; Appadurai 1990; Friedman 1997 and 1999; Tomlinson 1999; Nederveen Pieterse 2001; Whitmarsh 2010; Stockhammer2013; Pitts and Versluys 2015).

In this context, the paper suggests that the new globalization theories articulating the relations in both modernity and antiquity through constant, or at least periodical, an increase of connectivity of ideas, materials and communities, and deterritorialization and constant change of cultures, have sidelined the conceptions of classicism and orientalism, together with all other concepts of homogeneous blocks of 'authentic' cultures, as well as the rigid understandings for their trans-historical frontal clashes or mixing and hybridizations.

METHODOLOGY

This paper utilized a *longue durée* approach that analyzes parallelly the development and transformations of the conceptions of orientalism and classicism, displacing them from their traditional dichotomous context. Instead, it is reanalyzing their relation in a complex matrix of their shared roots and structure, built upon the identity needs and societal transformations in both antiquity and modernity.

The dominantly qualitative approach of this paper relies heavily on documentary evidence and secondary data sources, analyzing them mainly through a comparative research design. It uses the method of content analysis but also touches upon epistemology and the methodological approaches towards positivism and relativism. Also, the paper utilizes elements of the discourse analysis method concerning the ancient and modern identities of different 'glocalized' cultural groups and entities, their mutual relationships, and their relationships with identities and beliefs of the ancient and modern authors that illustrate or 'reimaging' them.

CLASSICISM AND THE EUROCENTRIC WORLD

In the new ideologically framed, clearly defined, and segmented concept for oneself and the world, of the XIX century, the science and scientific was 'objectified', clearly separated from the areas of the 'artistic' and the 'religious' and cleansed from their 'vague' influences. At the same time, this new 'rational' tendency in Europe, has found its symbols and narratives in antiquity, identifying itself as a bearer of the 'unique' traditions of Athens and Rome. Thus, through these tendencies, and for the needs of the modern ideals, ideas, and identities, the specific manifestations on European soil of the wider and complex ancient development of the Mediterranean and the Near East, were stripped of their context, and separated from a global history, as idealized ancient Atlantis, that should the resurrected, or at least eternally commemorated by the modern West. By the end of the XIX century, the new 'scientific' findings have liberated the European elites of the 'oriental illusion', which claimed that the classical world originated from the 'primitive cultures' of Babylon and Egypt (Athanassoglou-Kallmyer 2011).

The two social and cultural manifestations of the European coasts of the Mediterranean have transformed for the needs of self-identification and legitimation of the western elites, into separate islands of the authentic European, western, rational, and 'classical' heritage, whose value has exceeded to the point of incomparability with one of the earlier or related cultures of the ancient world. In that sense, the 'classical epoch', has transformed into the archetype of the 'western world', and a 'magical mirror' which speaks about its famous origin and past, as well as an ideal for the present and the future of the western man, society and world. The other 'ancient' cultures, as well as the modern ethnological complexity of the world, considered as 'inertial' and stagnant, 'mystical' and irrational, have transformed into an object of 'the healthy critical analysis' of the western man's skeptical mind, both in antiquity and modernity.

Moreover, this strong conceptual establishment influenced the classical world in a form of obsessive addiction in the modern western societies with the classical archetypes and benchmarks, creating real mimesis in the architecture and art, music and literature, law and philosophy, education and sport. Therefore, the 'imagined', and often 'fictional', classical culture has transformed into the living heritage that has grown into the tying thread of the "western civilization" (Dyson 2006, 1-19), as well as an authentic signature of the 'western administration' or domination over the rest of the world in the last few centuries (Grafton 2010, vii-ix).

ORIENTALISM: FROM REMNANT OF TRADITIONS TO CRITICAL REACTION

The 'classicistic' view on the world that separated the western and the European traditions, from the ones of the wider civilizational development of the ancient world, was challenged early by the orientalists. Their profound interest and learning of the Near East cultures, as well as the Middle and the Far East, was a continuity of the view on the history and the human civilization as unity, which was globally dominant before the French Revolution and the Spring of Nations in XIX century Europe. Nevertheless, the European domination in the world in the XIX century and the first half of the XX century, the colonial and imperial needs and views of the European elites, combined with the new national and racial theories, gave primacy to the divided world of different cultures and civilizations, in which the European one – the 'classical civilization', was morally and physically dominant, and as such legitimately governed with the world (Tevdovski and Ilievski 2015; Tevdovski and Masalkovski 2020).

That is why the appearance of orientalism as a scientific paradigm, firstly through the Edward Said's with the same name (Said 1977), as well as through the wider corpus of new views on the world, related and encouraged by his work, is a direct response of Eurocentric views on the world and global history, based on the central spot that the classical culture and its heritage supposedly held. Even though Said's initial analyses, and of those inspired by him, were mainly focused on the relations in modernity and literature, the paradigm of orientalism in the context of the wider global changes in the second half of the XX century, such as the anti-colonial movements and the decreased global influence on the European powers and centers, grew into a wider perspective, or at least a corrective of the views, on the human relations in the present, as well as through history.

In the scope of the several-decade lasting focus on the 'discourse' and 'hegemony' of the western imperialism and colonialism over the research of the past, by various analyses and authors, known under the general term 'post-colonial studies' and 'post-colonial critique', one of the fundamental paradigms of the western perspective on world's history, the domination of 'Greek-Roman culture' and the 'classical world' over the rest of the cultures and civilizations was seriously questioned. In this context, the cultural manifestations in the 'classical world' that were not part of the strict social and cultural standards, thoroughly filtrated during the XIX century by the western elites and called 'Greco-Roman culture', received a new recognition as the culture of the 'enslaved and oppressed' by the 'post-colonial authors'. Thus, through this new scientific tendency, the idealistic classical world of the Greeks and the Romans have transformed into stable dichotomies of the Greek against the Near Eastern and of the Roman against the oriental and native (Reeves 2004, 15-26; Diaz-Andreu 2007; Golden and Toohey 1997).

However, the great contribution of the 'post-colonial' critique with regards to the views on the classical world and the past, in general, had its limitations, as well as side effects and lateral tendencies. Thus, the recognition and definition of orientalism as a phenomenon, since Said's work, as conscious or unconscious stigmatization of the great variety in cultures and cultural characteristics, first and foremost from the Near East, but also from cultures of the further east, by the traditional western author, through their simplification and instrumentalization, needed for building the classical and broader western narrative and identity, has been more than useful for the scientific analyses, as well as for the modern social relations. Still, this significant development only partially led to real pluralization, objectification, and profound views on the cultural and social development of different communities and regions in the past. Many of the authors with post-colonial approach or perspective on the past and its research are basing their deconstructive analyses on Said's principles illustrated in his famous and often quoted expression: "No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life (…) there is such a thing as knowledge that is less (…) partial than the individual (…) who produces it. Yet, this knowledge is not therefore automatically nonpolitical" (Diaz-Andreu 2007, 11). Still, some of these authors are themselves illustrative examples of the subjectivity in science[1], whereas in the broader post-modern scientific context there are remarkable tendencies of using this kind of conclusions for promotion of subjectivism and vulgar scientific relativism (Pangle 2006, 7-42). In this context, a significant number of the post-colonial analyses, one can trace the tendency to recognize the newly 'emancipated nations' of the disintegrated colonial system into the narratives of the classical past. Taking the example of their former rulers – the European elites, the 'new nations' had to legitimize themselves through classical literature and artifacts, even if the only alternative is to be seen as descendants of 'the enslaved' and the marginalized cultures of the classical and ancient world. Thus, instead of moving towards a deeper understanding of the past and deconstruction of the artificially composed strata needed for the modern identities, orientalism at least through some of its side effects has transformed into an alter-ego of classicism. It has become a starting point and an excuse for all those eager to reach self-recognition on the other side, or the alternative identity of the known rigidly conceived 'classicistic vision' of the past. Enriched with its 'dark side', the classicistic view of the past and its standard narrative produced in the XIX century, have included extensively the history of the 'enslaved, ruled and oppressed', and, thus, they were accepted and recognized as new, reformed image of human history by various new elites and groups (Thomas and Burstein 1997, 37–54).

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[1]From today's point of view, Versluys, as many other modern authors, clearly defines this manifestation since the end of the previous century, speaking precisely about some of the post-colonial analyses of the classical world, that he names 'anti-colonial', including them in the context of the social-political, or the emphasized social-political influence over the scientific (Versluys 2014, 2-14).

This intense dichotomous relationship between the orientalism and the classicism that has been created over the last decades of the XX century reaches new dimensions through the rapid scientific growth in many areas, as well as the multilayer social transformations in the intense and globalizing world of the new millennium. The modern trends, achievements, and changing paradigms in various social and humanistic disciplines, combined with social, economic, cultural, and demographic changes in societies caused by strong globalization waves that are intensified over the past two decades, have created a new perspective for consistency and identity transformations, entities, communities and institutions as part of the broader historical development (Briant 1982).

As a result of these new tendencies, fewer researchers look at the categories and concepts created by the classicists, orientalists, and even the post-colonial authors, as compact, self-sustaining and static entities through history. Instead, these and the wider processes in the past, as well as in the present, are being increasingly looked upon as multifaceted and connected influences and transformations, whose appearance and development is directly related to the wider context and their mutual interrelations. In that sense, the scientific interest in globalization processes and their use as a methodological approach in analyzing societies, phenomena, and processes of the present, slowly, yet steadily, are being introduced into the scientific research of the past (Versluys 2014, 2-14). Nowadays, researchers of the 'early', 'ancient', the 'classical', the 'oriental', the 'barbaric' or the 'medieval' cultures, often avoid the rigid modern constructs and artificially closed systems of typification and periodization, that were created for the needs of epistemological validation in modern science. Instead, the modern researchers see these entities and processes as open mosaics of diversity, constantly reorganized by the diverse interactions among "people, ideas and materials, connected in constant and fast-paced globalization process" (Tevdovski 2020).

Due to the dynamics of these processes, we need to question again the relation between classicism and orientalism, first for their changing relations, and second because of the possibility for new perspectives and understandings of the building process of each of these concepts individually, in relation with one another, and as a reaction of the other. Sociologists, political scientists, and researchers in the area of cultural studies, already produced extensive material that describes the variety of layers in modern identities and misunderstandings, subjectivities, or related methodological irregularities that have integrated with the modern scientific and social views of the classical past and the past of the 'oriental cultures'. Still, it is left to the classical scientists, historians, archaeologists, and other researchers whose focus is this period and not modernity, to study the remains of the past that still exist under the layers of modern misunderstandings, delusions, and implications.

CONCLUSION

During the seventies of the XX century when Said in his 'orientalism' describes the need for abandoning the Eurocentric discourse about the past and the identity of many regions and cultures, his thoughts equally and consciously reflect the global changes caused by the industrial revolution, as well as the development and transformations of the modern world related with it. The inconsistencies of values, the constant value competition, ideas, cultural and material additions from a different origin, are the harbingers of the new world that will be subject to further recreation by the globalization process after the end of the Cold War.

Today, the scientific hypothesis and views of the XIX century timeless and conserved cultural cores or entities, such as nations, cultures, races or civilizations, that transform but persist next to each other, with their authentic values, symbols, and ideals, are being analyzed as an ideal of the European elites of the XIX century and recidivism of their new self-definition (Geary 2002, 157). At the same time, they are recognized as a need for scientific validation and tendency towards universalization of the new Westphalian model of global relations that was developed in that historical period (Diaz-Andreu 2007, 80; Tevdovski and Ilievski 2015, 7-22). The renowned globally prominent American historian and president of the Medieval Academy of America, Patrick Geary, have concluded in this context that:

> Modern history was born in the XIX century, conceived and developed as an instrument of European nationalism. As a tool of the nationalist ideology, the history of Europe's nations was a great success, but it has turned our understanding of the past into a toxic waste dump, filled with the poison of ethnic nationalism, and the poison has seeped deep into popular consciousness. Cleaning up this mess is the most daunting challenge for historians today (Geary 2002, 15).

The numerous scientific analyses based on or connected with the old scientific paradigms, that reflect the views and needs of the European elites in the XIX century and the Westphalian multi-polar model of governing with the continent and the world, are today perceived as a significant part of different scientific disciplines' professional history. Yet, at the same time, they represent a huge subjectivity burden whose overcoming is a crucial requirement for all studies related to the classical, or any other epoch of the human past. Despite these strong scientific traditions, the global and local developments of many epochs including the XIX century, still influential with its ideological recidivism in contemporary science, are seen today through new conceptual tendencies and principles. They are defined as models that are methodologically advanced and more applicable in diverse historical and geographical contexts. Hingley illustrates this significant paradigm change, analyzing that today "people in the western

world draw upon these ideas just as directly as their ancestors drew upon colonial concepts. This is why we cannot ignore globalization (...)" (Hingley 2015, 32). Today, there is no contemporary development, nor phenomenon, that can be imagined without the influence of the global context, where the ideas, materials, individuals, and groups, are in constant competition, and constant self-examination and re-imagination. Thus, the scientific views and ideas regarding various movements, processes, and groups throughout history are often seen through the lenses of this contemporary perspective as well (Hopkins 2002; Pitts and Versluys 2015, 3-25). In that context, the central spot belongs to the cultural and social cores of the globalization process, which extends geographically by taking new cultural elements from the local and transforming some of them into significant globalization ideas and symbols (Reeves 2004, 71-72; Morris 2005, 30-55).

The increased number of artifacts and the variety of sources discovered with scientific projects and new technologies over the last decades, as well as the progress in human relation theories, institutions, and identities by sociologists, political scientists, and researchers of cultural studies, create new complex images that show the modern scientific categories as the 'oriental' and the 'classical', or the historical manifestations defined through them, lose their compact character and limits, and interact through continuous mutual impacts and diverse processes that run through history. The complex process that defines this global dynamic in the widest sense, and the contemporary context, is called globalization, and more scientists each day relate it with the same processes and dynamics of earlier historical epochs. Hence, today we speak increasingly about the globalization process in early modernity, medieval period, classical epoch, and even in prehistory (Pieterse 2015, 225-237).

In the analyses and theories of numerous contemporary researchers, such as Frank, Gills, or Morris, the Near East, defining the Orient for centuries, is again perceived as the central locus where the core of the ancient globalization process has been created. Its key importance for global development is well captured in Wilkinson's construct 'central civilization'. Many contemporary researchers agree that the interactions of the cultures of the two significant and big regions, Mesopotamia and Egypt dated back to the Bronze Age, and facilitated through the millennial imperial traditions of the wider region, was crucial for the creation of a consistent and big enough civilizational core. This would become the founding element of the globalization process that dates from antiquity and has continued with different range dynamics until today.

In that sense, these theories of ancient globalization, or globalization *Avant la Lettre,* create a new perception about the classical period and classical civilization and their relation to the Orient and the Oriental. Within this new scientific perspective, the beginnings of the classical world are the result of the approach of the globalization culture of the Near East towards the Aegean and the European soil. Thus, the birth of

the 'classical civilization' cannot be perceived anymore, as opposing forces to the 'Orient'. Just in contrary, in the period between neo-Assyrian and Persian imperialism, when the globalization process resulted in the accumulation of ideas, knowledge, and materials from India to Egypt, it also had a significant impact on the intensive development of the communities in southern Europe. These 'classical Greeks' can no longer be treated as forefathers of the unique western values, and 'less-classical Macedonians', as forefathers of the Western imperialism and dominance over the world. The two nations, in the words of Strootman, can no longer be seen "as both Classicists and Orientalists have done (...) as proto-Europeans alien to the Near East" (Strootman 2013, 34). Instead, "Greeks and Macedonians (should be seen) as peoples integrated into a wider Mediterranean and Near Eastern 'world system'" (Strootman 2013, 34). Moreover, the world of the Macedonian imperialism, that created the classical world, its main cores, and much of its outreach, represents a continuation and extension of the process of the ancient globalization and the millennial imperial model, both developed in 'the oriental context' of the Near East.

Finally, the most western extension of the classical world and its cultural offerings, developed during the period of Roman imperialism, is perceived, though these new understandings of the past, as just another phase of the globalization *Avant la Lettre*. In this context, Rome and its 'classical culture' spread throughout the European continent is not just a continuation of the Macedonian and Persian, and thus Near Eastern cultural traditions, but also a shared heritage with the new 'oriental' empires, such as the Parthians (Strootman 2013).

This new methodological approach towards the past through the globalization theories, many of the entities and identities, more or less subjectively recognized and defined by the ancient, medieval, or modern authors, is objectified in relation with the general globalization principles or reaction to them, as well as to communities and elites, their symbols, traditions, narratives, and aspirations. It also provides an entirely new approach to the concepts of the 'classical' and the 'oriental'. It challenges and changes their traditional relation and dynamic, placing them into a fluid interrelation and further emphasizing their outdated nature in the context of contemporary scientific inquires of the past.

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